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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Justice Varma takes oath as Allahabad HC judge

PRAYAGRAJ, 5 APRIL

The Allahabad High Court Bar Association has condemned the clandestine oath-taking ceremony of Justice Yashwant Varma, who was transferred from the Delhi High Court amid allegations of unaccounted cash recovered from his residence. The ceremony was held in a private chamber, rather than in open court, which is the traditional and expected practice. The Bar Association questions why the oath was not notified to the Bar, alleging that this erodes trust in the judicial system. They claim that the oath administered to Justice Varma is "fallacious and unacceptable" and against the Constitution of India. Justice Varma's transfer was prompted by allegations of unaccounted cash recovered from his residence following a fire incident. An in-house inquiry was ordered by the Chief Justice of India, and a three-member panel has been constituted to investigate the matter. *—PTI*

India sends 442 MT of aid to quake-hit Myanmar

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

India on Saturday delivered a large consignment of food aid to quake-hit Myanmar at Thilawa Port in the southern coastal area to the Yangon region's chief minister as part of its ongoing Operation Brahma. A massive 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck Myanmar, with an epicentre near here, on 28 March and left over 3,100 dead. India launched Operation Brahma to provide necessary support, including Search and Rescue (SAR), humanitarian aid, disaster relief and medical assistance, following the devastating earthquake. *—PTI*

India, Lanka ink major defence pact amid Modi's visit

SL to not let nations use island against India

COLOMBO, 5 APRIL

In a significant move, India and Sri Lanka signed their first-ever major defence pact on Saturday, aimed at institutionalising deeper military cooperation between the two nations. The agreement comes amid growing regional security concerns and underscores the mutual trust and shared security interests between India and Sri Lanka.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his talks with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, emphasised that the security of both countries is closely linked and dependent on each other. The meeting resulted in the signing of seven key agreements, including initiatives to develop Trincomalee as an energy hub and enhance power grid connectivity.

One of the most notable aspects of the talks was the defence cooperation pact, signalling a new chapter in bilateral relations, especially after the withdrawal of Indian peacekeeping forces from Sri Lanka 35 years ago. President Dissanayake assured Modi that Sri Lanka would not allow its territory to be used in any manner that could harm India's security interests.

Modi also addressed the sensitive issue of fishermen disputes, advocating for a "humane approach" to resolve tensions between the two countries. He further expressed hope that Sri Lanka would fulfill the aspirations of the Tamil community and conduct provincial council elections in line with the 13th Amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution.

PM Narendra Modi being conferred with the 'Mithra Vibhushana' award by Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake **PHOTO: PTI**

On the economic front, Modi announced a support package of approximately 2.4 billion Sri Lankan rupees for the social and economic development of Sri Lanka's Eastern provinces. India also reaffirmed its commitment to assisting Sri Lanka's economic recovery by converting loans into grants, reducing interest rates on loans, and providing debt restructuring assistance.

Modi and Dissanayake also inaugurated the Sampur solar power plant virtually, highlighting the bilateral push towards sustainable energy. The Prime Minister concluded by reiterating India's commitment to supporting Sri Lanka in various sectors, including digital identity projects and cultural preservation.

These agreements reflect India's broader engagement with the Global South through its "MAHASAGAR" vision, aiming for mutual and holistic advancement in regional security and growth. *—PTI*

Suspecting affair, B'luru man kills wife on the street

BENGALURU, 5 APRIL

In a chilling case of domestic violence driven by suspicion and rage, a 35-year-old woman was allegedly stabbed to death by her husband in full public view near Pragathi Nagar, Doddathoguru, under the jurisdiction of the Electronics City Police Station.

The accused, who had initially fled the scene, has now been arrested.

The victim, Sharada, hailed from Bagepalli and was living with her husband, Krishna, in the Electronics City. According to police sources, the couple frequently quarrelled, allegedly due to Krishna's unfounded suspicions about Sharada's fidelity. Around 8pm on Friday, Sharada had stepped out of the house. Krishna, lying in wait, attacked her with a knife as she was returning home. The assault took place in the middle of the street, where Krishna reportedly slit her throat and fled. Passers-by, shocked by the brutal act, immediately alerted the police.

Electronics City Police rushed to the spot, conducted a preliminary investigation, and shifted Sharada's body to St John's Hospital for post-mortem. A case under Section 101 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was registered, and a manhunt for the absconding accused was launched. On Saturday, local residents spotted Krishna and handed over to the police. Investigations have revealed that he had brought two knives with the intention of murdering his wife. *—Salar News*

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during flagging off ceremony of Indian Ocean Ship SAGAR **PHOTO: PTI**

Rajnath flags off IOS SAGAR at Karwar naval base

KARWAR, 5 APRIL

Indian Ocean Ship SAGAR or IOS SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region),

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has flagged off the Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR from the strategically located Karwar naval base in Karnataka. The IOS SAGAR initiative aims to promote cooperation with nations in the Indian Ocean Region, reinforcing India's commitment to a secure and inclusive maritime environment.

During his visit to the base, Singh also inaugurated newly developed infrastructure, a significant milestone under Project Seabird. The Navy is expanding the crucial naval base as part of Project Seabird, which was initially designed to accommodate 10 ships and has now been expanded to berth 32 ships and submarines, along with 23 yardcraft.

The first phase of Project Seabird was completed in 2011, accommodating 10 ships. The current expansion includes a breakwater, a pier capable of berthing 10 ships, a 10,000-ton ship lift and dry berth, a naval ship-repair yard, logistics and armament storage facilities, and accommodation for 1,000 personnel. The Indian Ocean Ship SAGAR is a symbol of India's efforts to strengthen ties with its maritime neighbours, promoting a safer and more secure maritime environment in the Indian Ocean Region.

The initiative is part of India's vision of Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across the Regions (MAHASAGAR). The expansion of the Karwar Naval Base and the IOS SAGAR initiative demonstrate India's commitment to enhancing its maritime security and cooperation with neighbouring countries. The Defence Minister's office stated that the expansion would enhance India's maritime security with cutting-edge facilities and advanced operational capabilities. *—PTI*

K'taka HC bats for UCC, gender equality in property

BENGALURU, 5 APRIL

The Karnataka High Court has urged both the Parliament and State Legislatures to make a concerted effort to enact a law that would bring about a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), emphasising its importance in upholding the constitutional vision of equality, secularism, and justice for all citizens—especially women.

The strong recommendation came from a single-judge bench presided over by Justice Hanchate Sanjeev Kumar while ruling on a civil appeal filed by Samiulla Khan and others, who were contesting the distribution of properties left behind by their sister Shahnaz Begum. The plaintiffs—two brothers and a sister, claimed that both properties in question (referred to as Schedule 'A' and Schedule 'B') were self-acquired by the deceased, and therefore, all three plaintiffs, along with the deceased's husband (the defendant), were equally entitled to a 50-50 division.

The case raised broader questions around inheritance laws governed by personal religious statutes and their implications on gender justice. Justice Kumar asserted,"The country needs a Uniform Civil Code in respect of Personal Laws and religion," the Court on April 4 observed, "only then the object of Article 14 of the Constitution of India will be achieved."

The Court underscored that although women across India are equal citizens under the Constitution, they are subjected to unequal treatment due to religion-based personal laws.

Differentiating between Hindu and Muslim laws, Justice Kumar pointed out that while Hindu law grants daughters equal rights in ancestral property, Muslim personal law distinguishes between brothers and sisters, granting brothers the status of 'sharers' while the sisters often fall under the 'residuary' category, thereby receiving a lesser share.

Noting that states like Goa and Uttarakhand have already taken steps towards implementing a UCC, the court directed the Registrar General to send a copy of its judgment to the Principal Law Secretaries of both the union government and the Karnataka government, in the hope that legislative efforts toward enacting such a code would be initiated. *—PTI*

24 get notices for black band Waqf Bill protest

MUZAFFARNAGAR, 5 APRIL

Authorities in Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar district have issued notices against 24 people for protesting against the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025 by wearing black badges and asked them to furnish bonds of Rs 2 lakh each.

Superintendent of Police (City) Satyanarayan Prajapat on Saturday told reporters that notices were served to 24 persons in this connection, and added that police have identified more people on the basis of CCTV footage.

The notices were issued by City Magistrate Vikas Kashyap on the police report, asking them to furnish bonds of Rs two lakh each after appearing before the court on April 16.

The Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha with 128 members voting in favour and 95 opposing it **PHOTO: PTI**

These people were found protesting against the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025 and wearing black badges on their arms during last Friday prayers of Ramzan in different mosques here on March 28.

The people who got notices issued against them said they wore black badges only to show protest in a democratic way.

Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju tabled the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025 in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, asserting that the legislation is not against Muslims or intended to hurt their religious feelings, but seeks to improve the functioning of Waqf properties, address complexities, ensure transparency and introduce technology-driven management.

The Lok Sabha passed the Bill by a 288-232 vote in the early hours of Thursday, after nearly 12 hours of debate, and the Rajya Sabha gave its nod to the legislation following an over 13-hour debate.

The Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha with 128 members voting in favour and 95 opposing it. *—PTI*

A mini bus and a truck after an accident in Kalaburagi on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

5 killed after mini bus rams into truck in Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI, 5 APRIL

Five people, including a 13-year-old girl, died and 11 others were injured after a mini bus they were travelling in allegedly rammed into a parked truck near Nelogi Cross in Jewargi taluk of this district in the wee hours of Saturday, police said.

The passengers, all residents of Bagalkote, were en route a dargah at 3.30 am in the Kalaburagi district when the truck tyre got punctured and the driver stopped to change the tyre. A speeding mini bus, whose driver is alleged to have fallen asleep hit the truck and five people died on the spot while several were injured.

Those injured have been shifted to a hospital where they are undergoing treatment, the police said.

Initially, police thought that the driver of the mini bus must have fled the spot after the accident, only to later find him lying on the road in a pool of blood. He is undergoing treatment at the hospital and is stated to be in a critical condition, police said.

A case has been registered for causing death due to negligence under section 106 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and further investigation is underway. *—PTI*

INDUSTRY AT HEADWINDS

Jaguar halts shipments to US amid tariffs

LONDON, 5 APRIL

- Jaguar Land Rover Automotive, one of Britain's biggest carmakers, said Saturday that the pause would take place this month.

The British maker of Jaguar and Land Rover cars is pausing shipments to the US as it works to mitigate the impact of a 25 per cent tax on vehicle imports imposed by the Trump Administration.

Jaguar Land Rover Automotive, one of Britain's biggest carmakers, said Saturday that the pause would take place this month. "The USA is an important market for JLR's luxury brands," the company said in a statement. "As we work to address the new trading terms without business partners, we are taking some short-term actions including a shipment pause in April, as we develop our mid-to-longer term plans."

The UK automotive industry is expected to be hit hard by the new tariffs, which come at a time when British carmakers are struggling with declining demand at home and the need to retool their plants for the transition to electric vehicles.

"The industry is already facing multiple headwinds and this announcement comes at the worst possible time," Mike Hawes, chief executive of the UK's Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, said last week. "SMMT is in constant contact with government and will be looking for trade discussions to accelerate as we need to secure a way forward that supports jobs and economic growth on both sides of the Atlantic."

PHOTO: X

The number of cars made in the UK dropped 13.9% to 779,584 vehicles last year, according to the SMMT. More than 77% of those vehicles were destined for the export market.

UK carmakers have already taken steps to lessen the immediate impact of the tariffs by building stockpiles in the US before the increase took effect. SMMT figures show that exports to the US jumped 38.5 per cent from a year earlier in December, 12.4 per cent in January and 34.6% per cent in February. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

B'luru man dies over creditor's harassment

BENGALURU, 5 APRIL

A 34-year-old man from Andrahalli has tragically taken his own life, reportedly due to relentless harassment from moneylenders. The deceased, identified as Purushotham, was a former auto driver who later worked in a private company before resigning due to health issues. Survived by his wife and young son, Purushotham had borrowed money from several individuals but struggled to repay it due to his deteriorating health and lack of income. According to police reports, he died by suicide at home by hanging himself from a ceiling fan. A suicide note found at the scene named four individuals and accused them of subjecting him to mental torture over repayment. Byadarahalli police have initiated an investigation, recovering the note and evaluating all available evidence for further action. *—Salar News*

Youth surrenders after murdering wife over suspicion

MYSURU, 5 APRIL

A 26-year-old man, Sachin, surrendered to Bilikere Police in Hunsur taluk on Friday, confessing to the murder of his wife, Pavithra, 26, whom he suspected of infidelity. The couple had married six months ago after meeting on social media. At around 8pm, Sachin appeared at the police station and admitted to hacking his wife to death. Police promptly recovered the body from the crime scene and sent it for a post-mortem at KR Hospital mortuary in Mysuru. The post-mortem was completed on Saturday, and the body was handed over to Pavithra's relatives. *—Salar News*

Youth drowns in Cauvery near Mandya

MYSURU, 5 APRIL

A 35-year-old man, Mahesh, drowned in the Cauvery River near Mahadevapura in Srirangapatna, Mandya, on Saturday. Mahesh, a resident of Hunsur town and an employee at Vikrant Tyre factory, had attended a housewarming ceremony at his friend's place in Tarikere village. After the event, he went swimming in the river with friends, where he got caught in a whirlpool. Arakere police were alerted, rushed to the scene, and retrieved Mahesh's body. A case has been registered, and further investigation is underway. *—Salar News*

BEML launches indigenously made motor grader

MYSURU, 5 APRIL

Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML Ltd), a leading Indian manufacturer of mining and construction equipment, has launched its indigenously designed Motor Grader BG 1205 at its Mysuru facility. The launch ceremony, attended by BEML's Chairman and Managing Director, Shantanu Roy, and Harish Duhan, CMD of South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL), marks a significant milestone in BEML's commitment to self-reliance and the Government of India's Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. The BG 1205, equipped with a 24-foot blade, is engineered for high-intensity operations and addresses the increasing demand for efficient road-laying machinery in the mining sector. Both executives highlighted the importance of this innovation for enhancing productivity and supporting India's mining infrastructure development, reinforcing BEML's position in indigenous manufacturing and commitment to a self-reliant economy. *—Salar News*

BJP protests over party cadre's 'suicide'

Siddaramaiah accuses BJP of doing politics, Parameshwara says probe is on

BENGALURU/KODAGU, 5 APRIL

The death of BJP worker Vinay Somaiah, 40, who allegedly died by suicide in Bengaluru on Friday, has triggered widespread protests and accusations of political pressure.

BJP leaders staged a protest in Kushalnagar, Kodagu district, demanding the names of two Congress MLAs, AS Ponnanna and Mantar Gowda, be included in the FIR in connection with the case.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has accused the BJP of politicising the tragedy, while the investigation continues to unfold.

The protests saw several prominent BJP leaders, including state president BY Vijayendra, MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, former MP Pratap Simha, and former Speaker KG Bopaiah, detained by police after they attempted to lay siege to the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) office in Kushalnagar. The BJP workers shouted slogans against the police, accusing them of delaying justice by not naming the two Congress MLAs in the FIR.

Somaiah, a BJP functionary from Somwarpet taluk in Kodagu, was found dead in his office in Bengaluru under suspicious circumstances. The police have stated that no suicide note was recovered from the scene, but a purported death note was allegedly shared on a WhatsApp group shortly before his death, accusing Congress leaders of harassment.

In the note, Somaiah mentioned his arrest in February by Madikeri police following a complaint filed by Congress worker Thennira Maheena, accusing him of posting derogatory comments about Ponnanna in the WhatsApp group, of which he was the admin. Somaiah was released on bail, but he alleged that the FIR was politically motivated and that he faced humiliation.

Vinay Somaiah, a BJP functionary from Somwarpet taluk in Kodagu, was found dead in his office in Bengaluru *PHOTO: SALAR*

The FIR, however, did not mention the names of Ponnanna, Gowda, and one Harish Poovaiah, despite their names being mentioned in the complaint filed by Somaiah's brother, Jeevan KS. BJP leaders are alleging that the police have recorded only Thennir Mahina's name in the FIR This selective omission has led to mounting criticism from BJP leaders, who claim that political pressure is influencing the investigation.

Vijayendra and other BJP leaders have demanded that the names of the two MLAs be added to the FIR. He accused the police of being under the pressure of the ruling Congress party and alleged that police stations were functioning like Congress offices. "The police should act impartially. If they do not name the MLAs, BJP will hold them responsible for the consequences," he said, urging the government to take the matter seriously.

"Let it take any amount of time. Until the officials get permission from the Magistrate court and mention MLAs' names in the FIR, we will wait. If they don't do it, the police will be responsible for the things that may happen. The police should not allow the law and order situation to deteriorate under political pressure," he said. Meanwhile, the body of Somaiah has been sent to his native village, Gonimaruru, for the final rites, which took place under tight police security. A large police force, around 800 personnel, was deployed in Kushalnagar to manage the situation, with BJP activists continuing to protest in several other locations.

Siddaramaiah dismissed the BJP's accusations, stating, "The FIR has already been filed, and an investigation is underway.

The BJP is politicising this issue. The police will take appropriate action based on the investigation. I will not interfere in the case."

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said law is equal for everyone and the police will take necessary action in accordance with law.

"The incident had happened in February and he has committed suicide now. The police department is investigating. Somaiah has posted a detailed note on WhatsApp, and police will analyse everything and take action," he said.

Asked whether the case will be handed over to CID, the home minister said, "if necessary it may be done, but at present we don't see the need." *—Salar News with agencies*

K'taka lorry strike on 15 April over diesel price hike

BENGALURU, 5 APRIL

PHOTO: ANI

The Federation of Karnataka State Lorry Owners and Agents Association (FKSLOAA) has announced a statewide lorry strike on 15 April in response to the recent surge in diesel prices, which they claim is threatening the financial stability of transport operators.

Beginning at midnight on 14 April, the strike will see goods-carrying vehicles across the state come to a standstill, impacting the supply of essential construction materials such as jelly, M-sand, and groceries. However, the transport of milk and emergency medical services will continue unimpeded. The association anticipates that around 6,000 lorries, including those coming from neighbouring states, will cease operations.

Association President Shanmugappa expressed frustration over the continuous rise in operational costs, stating, "Diesel prices have risen by Rs 2 per litre due to a 2.73 per cent hike in sales tax by the state government. Since the new administration took office, diesel prices have been increased twice. We condemn this," he remarked after a meeting of the lorry owners' group in Bengaluru.

He highlighted that the price of diesel has now reached Rs 91.02 per litre in Bengaluru. The combination of rising diesel prices and escalating costs for oil, tyres, spare parts, insurance, and taxes has made lorry operation increasingly unfeasible. "The common man is already struggling with inflation, and this will exacerbate the situation. We have no choice but to protest," he added.

The association is urging the state government to roll back the diesel tax hike and provide relief to the transport sector. Taxi operators have also pledged their support for the strike, which could significantly amplify its impact. *—Salar News*

Activists to protest removal of Bandipur night ban

MYSURU, 5 APRIL

Environmentalists, farmers, Dalits, and various progressive and Kannada organisations, under the banner of the United Conservation Movement, will participate in a rally on Sunday to protest the speculated removal of the night traffic ban passing through Bandipur Tiger Reserve. The protest, dubbed 'Bandipur Chalo', will begin at 10.30am from Kaggaladahundi Primary Health Centre on NH766 near Gundlupet town, covering a 2.5 km stretch to the Maddur check post along the Bandipur-Sultan Bathery road.

The rally will culminate in a memorandum submission to S Prabhakaran, the Project Director of Bandipur Tiger Reserve. The protesters are demanding that the government maintain the current ban on vehicle movement between 9pm and 6am.

The night traffic ban has been in effect since 2010 to reduce habitat disturbance and prevent wildlife deaths from accidents.

However, persistent pressure from Kerala has led to discussions about lifting the ban, particularly to allow 24x7 vehicle movement, which has sparked widespread concern. The ban only allows specific public transport vehicles and ambulances during the restricted hours.

Bandipur, a critical wildlife habitat home to over 150 tigers, elephants, leopards, and other species, is a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere. *—Salar News*

FIRST HAJJ WALKATHON

Bengaluru hosted India's first Hajj Walkathon to raise awareness about the importance of walking for Hajj pilgrims. Hundreds participated in the 2-km walk from Hajj Bhawan to Rewa University. Minister Rahim Khan inaugurated the event, with AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan emphasising the physical demands of the Hajj journey *PHOTO: SALAR*

3 vehicles gutted in fire near Cantonment rly stn

BENGALURU, 5 APRIL

Three vehicles parked near the Cantonment Railway Station were reduced to charred wrecks after a fire broke out at approximately 11am on Saturday. The blaze involved a goods vehicle and two towing trucks, which were parked adjacent to a pile of rubbish. Fortunately, there were no reported casualties or injuries. Preliminary investigations indicate the fire may have originated from the garbage heap, potentially ignited by a carelessly discarded cigarette. The flames spread quickly to the nearby vehicles until alert locals raised the alarm. Fire and emergency personnel arrived promptly with two fire tenders and extinguished the blaze; however, the vehicles suffered significant damage. Officials from Bharathinagar Police Station are investigating the incident. *—Salar News*

Firefighters contain a blaze near East DCP Office in Station Road, Bengaluru, involving trees and vehicles *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Karnataka signs deal with Chile to better tech ties

BENGALURU, 5 APRIL

In a move to boost international collaboration in science, technology, and innovation, the Karnataka government signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with the Government of Chile during the Innovation Summit in Bengaluru. The summit was part of Chilean President Gabriel Boric's official visit to India.

The LoI outlines a framework for cooperation between Karnataka and Chile in emerging technologies, startups, research and development, skill development, and knowledge exchange. This agreement marks Chile as the first Latin American country to partner with Karnataka under the Global Innovation Alliance (GIA), an initiative promoting cross-border innovation and entrepreneurship.

President Boric invited Karnataka's startups and tech firms to explore opportunities in Chile's growing innovation ecosystem. Karnataka IT Minister Priyank Kharge highlighted the state's strengths as a global tech hub, stressing the potential of the partnership to unlock new opportunities for both regions.

This collaboration is expected to enhance market access for startups, foster joint R&D efforts, facilitate academic exchanges, and promote investments in key technology sectors. It also aims to strengthen institutional ties between research bodies in both regions.

Earlier, President Boric visited Raj Bhavan, where he was warmly welcomed by Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot. *—PTI*

Govt depts owe Rs 187 crore to BWSSB

BENGALURU, 5 APRIL

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has revealed that several government departments, including the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), are among the largest defaulters of water bills, collectively owing more than Rs 187 crore in unpaid dues.

This revelation comes at a time when BWSSB is planning to raise water tariffs, citing rising operational costs and mounting financial losses. Meanwhile, ordinary residents, facing declining groundwater levels, are penalised for even minor delays in bill payments, highlighting the stark disparity in the system.

BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar confirmed that the total outstanding amount from government departments exceeds the utility's monthly revenue, with penalties and interest pushing the arrears to around Rs 190 crore. Defaulters include the BBMP, Department of Education, Health, Horticulture, Police, Forest, and Animal Husbandry departments, despite these bodies being well-funded and public-facing.

In contrast, residents who delay payments by more than three months face water disconnections. This has sparked public outrage, with citizens questioning. BWSSB is launching a One-Time Settlement scheme, offering defaulters the opportunity to clear their dues with accumulated interest. *—PTI*

SCORCHING HEAT OF 40°C

Bidar youths help animals quench thirst

BIDAR, 5 APRIL

With temperatures soaring to around 40°C in Bidar, the scorching heat is taking a toll on both people and wildlife. The intense sun has dried up lakes, leaving animals and birds in desperate need of water. In response, the Swabhimani Geleyara Balaga, a youth group from Bidar, has launched an initiative to provide relief by setting up cement water troughs in forest areas.

For the past five years, the group has been constructing small cement water troughs in wildlife-rich areas like the Chitta, Devavana, Bellura, and Chitguppa forests. These troughs are regularly filled with water, helping to quench the thirst of wild animals such as deer, squirrels, and various birds, including sparrows and crows. The group also distributes earthen water bowls in urban areas to provide drinking water for birds and small animals.

For the past five years, the group has been constructing small cement water troughs in wildlife-rich areas *PHOTO: SALAR*

"We have installed around 30-40 cement ponds and 1500-1800 earthen bowls annually. These come in two sizes—3 litres for birds and 180 litres for larger animals," said Ayyappa, a member of the group. They refill approximately 500 litres of water twice a week at these sites, benefiting over 100-300 animals and birds.

The initiative has garnered attention from local residents and wildlife enthusiasts. Videos of wild animals and birds drinking from these water points have been widely shared on social media, giving the group recognition for their efforts.

Vaanathi Murugesan, Deputy Conservator of Forests, noted, "Each year, water is supplied to cement troughs in forest areas to quench the thirst of wildlife. This year, we've constructed 16-20 ponds and refill them with water every 20-25 days."

Despite initial struggles with resources, the group remains committed to their cause. "We do this because we love the forest," said Chandu Padashetty, a founding member. *—Salar News*

Protest over 4G jammer at Mangaluru Central Prison

MANGALURU, 5 APRIL

Hundreds of people, led by BJP legislator D Vedavyas Kamat, protested outside Mangaluru Central Prison on Saturday, demanding action over the installation of a 4G jammer that disrupted mobile network access in the surrounding area.

Kamat claimed that mobile phone users within a 1km radius of the prison were facing connectivity issues, as the jammer was not confined to the prison's interior, despite prior requests to the State Prison Department to limit its reach. Protesters attempted to siege the jail before being taken into custody by the police. The issue stems from a high-profile incident last year when a prisoner from Mangaluru, currently housed in Belagavi prison, allegedly made a threatening call to Union Minister for Highways, Nitin Gadkari.

The inmate demanded 100 crore from Gadkari, threatening to kill him if the money was not paid. The incident sparked national attention, prompting the Karnataka prison department to upgrade the Belagavi jail's jammer capacity from 2G to 4G in January 2025.In response, Prison Department has now agreed to restrict the jammer's signal to the interior of the prison, resolving the issue for local mobile users. *—Salar News*

AIMPLB seeks meeting with Prez over Waqf Bill

NEW DELHI, 4 APRIL

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board has sought an urgent appointment with President Droupadi Murmu to express their concern on the recently passed Waqf (Amendment) Bill before she gives her assent to it. A letter released by the organisation states that the Board's purpose of meeting the President is to express deep concern about the Bill's implication for the Muslim community. It further states that the legislation is "thoroughly unconstitutional and is an attack on Muslims". The Board requested the President that "given the gravity of the matter", she grant it an early appointment convenient. *—PTI*

NIA charges top Hizb leader with terrorism

NEW DELHI, 4 APRIL

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has charged Faizul Hussain, a top leader of Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Tamil Nadu, with promoting the group's violent ideology and inciting youth to fulfill its anti-India agenda. Hussain was arrested on 8 October, 2024, for allegedly radicalizing Muslim youngsters and propagating the group's agenda to establish an Islamic Caliphate in India. The NIA alleges that Hussain conducted covert meetings and propagated extremist beliefs through social media, disseminating anti-national content and promoting secessionist ideology. He allegedly advocated Kashmir's secession from India and urged military intervention by the Pakistan Army. The NIA took over the case from the state police in July 2024 and filed charges under the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Hussain faces charges of promoting extremism and inciting youth to fulfill Hizb-ut-Tahrir's anti-India goals. *—PTI*

Delhi govt to roll out Ayushman Bharat scheme

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

In a move towards expanding people's access to healthcare in the national capital, the BJP-led Delhi government inked a MoU with the Centre on Saturday to implement the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana in the city. With this, Delhi has become the 35th state/Union Territory to implement the health insurance scheme. West Bengal is now the only state which has not implemented the scheme. The Ayushman Bharat scheme provides free and cashless treatment for 1,961 medical procedures across 27 specialities, covering the costs of medicines, diagnostic services, hospitalisation, ICU care, surgeries and more. Under it, eligible families in Delhi will receive an annual health coverage of up to Rs 10 lakh. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

SNDP leader calls Malappuram 'a separate nation'

MALAPPURAM, 5 APRIL

Vellappally Natesan, General Secretary of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam, has sparked controversy with his comments about Malappuram district in Kerala. Addressing a community convention, Natesan described Malappuram as a "separate nation" or an exclusive "state of certain people", claiming that members of the Ezhava community live in constant fear. Natesan alleged that the community members are treated as "voting machines" and are unable to express their independent opinions. He attributed the Ezhava community's backwardness in Malappuram to this perceived marginalisation. *—PTI*

AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan moves SC against Waqf Bill

He claims the Bill violates eight Articles of the Constitution

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

After Congress and AIMIM, Aam Aadmi Party MLA Amanatullah Khan moved the Supreme Court, challenging the constitutional validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Khan sought that the Waqf (Amendment) Bill be declared as "unconstitutional and being violative of Articles 14, 15, 21, 25, 26, 29, 30 and 300-A of the Constitution" and sought direction for striking it down.

Similarly, an NGO Association for the Protection of Civil Rights also moved the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of the Bill, which is to be renamed as the Unified Waqf Management Empowerment, Efficiency, and Development Bill, 2025 (UMEED Bill).

"The bill directly violates Articles 14, 25, 26, and 300A of the Constitution, along with the preambular values that constitute the bedrock of our democratic and secular framework," it said in its plea filed through Adeel Ahmed.

It said the drastic overhaul proposed by the UMEED Bill is not only unnecessary but also an alarming interference into the religious affairs of the Muslim community, diluting the fundamental purpose of Waqf which is a practice deeply rooted in Quranic references and the Hadith since the time of Prophet Mohammad.

The NGO further submitted that the unjustified omission of provision, which upholds the Waqf by User doctrine, constitutes a deliberate weakening of the legal recognition granted to Waqf properties.

It said the removal of this provision represents an attempt to erode the foundational principles protecting Waqf properties and disrupts the balance between religious autonomy and state oversight.

On Friday, Congress MP Mohammad Jawed and AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi moved the apex court, against the Bill. *—PTI*

An NGO also moving the Supreme Court said the Bill disrupts the balance between religious autonomy and state oversight *PHOTO: PTI*

RSS mouthpiece withdraws article after backlash from Oppn

New Delhi, 4 April

'Organiser', the RSS' mouthpiece magazine pulled down an article comparing land owned by Catholic churches and the Waqf Board after receiving sharp criticism from Oposition leaders. The article was titled 'Who has more land in India? The Catholic Churches Vs Waqf Board debate', prompting sharp criticism from the Opposition.

"You can call the Waqf (Amendment) Bill a black law, jungle law, or even more dangerous than those

-Allama Bani Nayeem Hasani, All India Ulema Board President

The Bill has not been passed by a huge majority. Till the last minute, senior BJP leaders from Maharashtra and Delhi were in touch with Shiv Sena (UBT). Our (Opposition's) figure would have swelled but some of our members were not present or ill

-Sanjay Raut, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader

I had said that the Waqf Bill attacks Muslims now but sets a precedent to target other communities in the future. It didn't take long for the RSS to turn its attention to Christians

-Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition

What has come out is the true mindset of the RSS. The extremely intense anti-religious sentiment of the majority communalism put forward by the Sangh Parivar can be seen in the article

-Pinarayi Vijayan, Kerala Chief Minister

'CAN'T STOP DEVELOPMENT'

Lay down arms, Shah urges Naxals

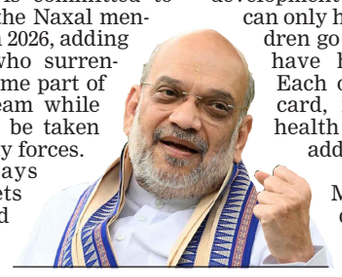
DANTEWADA/ HYDERABAD 5 APRIL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said Naxals would not be able to stop the development of tribals in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region and urged them to lay down arms.

Addressing the closing ceremony of the state government's 'Bastar Pandum' festival, Shah reiterated that the government is committed to eliminating the Naxal menace by March 2026, adding that those who surrender will become part of the mainstream while the rest will be taken on by security forces.

"The days when bullets were fired and bombs exploded in Bastar are over. I urge Naxalite brothers to lay down arms. No one feels happy when any Naxalite is killed. Just surrender your weapons and join the mainstream. You cannot stop the development of your tribal brothers and sisters," he said.

"This region needs development. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to give everything to Bastar in five years. Bastar has not seen development in 50 years. This can only happen when children go to school, tehsils have health facilities. Each one has Aadhaar card, ration card and health insurance," he added.



Meanwhile, 86 Maoists surrendered to police in Telangana. *—PTI*

CPI(M) SET TO ELECT NEW GENERAL SECY

MADURAI, 5 APRIL

As the Communist Party of India (Marxist) prepares to elect its new general secretary, speculation mounts regarding potential candidates, particularly MA Baby and Ashok Dhawale. Baby, a Politburo member since 2012, is a strong contender with backing from the party's Kerala unit. Meanwhile, Dhawale, president of the All India Kisan Sabha, has supporters advocating for his candidacy, especially as agricultural issues gain prominence and the party seeks to bolster its presence in rural areas.

Concerns also arise over the party's role in the INDIA opposition bloc against the ruling BJP, as choices like Baby may confine the party's influence in Kerala, while Dhawale could help expand its reach in the Hindi belt. Other names include Mohammed Salim, BV Raghavulu, and Brinda Karat. Following the death of Sitaram Yechury last year, Prakash Karat has been serving as interim coordinator. *—PTI*

Kamra removed from BookMyShow: Sena

MUMBAI, 5 APRIL

The Shiv Sena's Rahool Kanal claimed on Saturday that BookMyShow has removed stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra from its artist and sales listings, a move he supported as a step towards maintaining "pure entertainment." Acknowledging the action, Kanal expressed gratitude to BookMyShow CEO Ashish Hemrajani, stating that the platform's efforts to exclude Kamra reflect a commitment to sensible content.

Rahool Kanal. *PHOTO: PTI*

This development comes amid a growing controversy following Kamra's remarks about Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. Kamra has failed to respond to three police summons related to allegedly defamatory comments made during a performance. The Khar police had recently contacted Kamra at his residence after he missed an earlier summons.

Allegations stemming from Kamra's remarks led to acts of vandalism at the studio where he performed, igniting further tensions within the political landscape. Despite being granted interim anticipatory bail by the Madras High Court until 7 April, Kamra has opted not to address the Mumbai police.

With multiple FIRs filed against him across various districts, the legal situation remains precarious for the comedian, who is currently believed to be in Puducherry.

As the divide between political expression and entertainment continues to blur, the ramifications for artists like Kamra could set significant precedents. *—PTI*

PEACE TALKS

Centre holds talks with Meitei, Kuki groups to end conflict

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

The Centre on Saturday held a meeting with representatives of Manipur's warring Meitei and Kuki communities, in an effort to bring a lasting peace in the restive state.

The meeting aimed to enhance trust and cooperation between the two communities and finding a roadmap to restore peace and normalcy in Manipur.

A six-member Meitei delegation comprising representatives from the All Manipur United Clubs' Organisation (AMUCO) and the Federation of Civil Society Organisations (FOCS) attended the meeting.

The Kuki delegation comprised about nine representatives.

The central government interlocutors included AK Mishra, a retired special director of the Intelligence Bureau.

Government holds meeting with Meitei and Kuki communities in New Delhi *PHOTO: ANI*

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs had held discussions with representatives of the two communities in the past.

Home Minister Amit Shah termed the situation largely under control as there has been no death in the last four months. However, displaced people are still living in relief camps.

President's rule in Manipur was imposed on February 13 after the then chief minister N Biren Singh resigned on February 9.

The state assembly with tenure till 2027 has been put under suspended animation.

About 260 people have been killed since the ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 2023. *—PTI*

Govt approves additional flood relief for 4 states

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

A high-level committee chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah has sanctioned an additional Rs 1,280.35 crore in central assistance for Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry, affected by flood, flash flood, cloudburst, landslides and cyclonic storm in 2024.

This funding is aimed at aiding recovery from flash floods, cloudbursts, landslides, and cyclonic storms.

Of the total amount, Rs 588.73 crore is allocated to Bihar, Rs 136.22 crore to Himachal Pradesh, Rs 522.34 crore to Tamil Nadu, and Rs 33.06 crore to Puducherry, as confirmed by an official statement. This financial support is supplemental to previous allocations from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and the Union Territorial Disaster Response Fund (UTDRF). *—PTI*

FM says ONOE will by come after 2034

CHENNAI, 5 APRIL

Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday dismissed the false propaganda surrounding the 'One Nation, One Election' concept, clarifying that it will not be implemented in the upcoming elections.

"If simultaneous elections are held for electing the members of Parliament and Assembly, about 1.5 per cent growth will be added to the country's GDP. In value terms, Rs 4.50 lakh crore will get added to the economy. This is a black and white example of One Nation One Election concept," she said during an event near here.

Sitharaman accused certain parties of "spreading a false campaign" on the 'One Nation One Election' initiative, blindly opposing it.

She said that simultaneous polls are planned to take place only after 2034 and the groundwork is being laid now for the President to give assent.

"This concept was in existence till 1960s. Instead of blindly opposing it, if it has been supported considering its benefit, the country will prosper," the union minister remarked.

Sitharaman claimed that the late DMK Patriarch M Karunanidhi had supported the One Nation One Election' concept, but his son and the current Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin is opposing it. *—PTI*

Cong calls for unified response to tariffs

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

Senior Congress leader Anand Sharma has condemned the recent unilateral imposition of tariffs by the US as "unfortunate" and detrimental to global trade. Addressing a press conference, the former Union minister urged the Indian government to engage all political parties and stakeholders when formulating its strategy in response to these tariffs. He stressed that national interests must be a priority in any decision-making process, particularly to protect farmers and industry.

Anand Sharma *PHOTO: ANI*

Sharma described President Trump's actions as a significant disruption to the multilateral trade system and warned that they could have severe repercussions for all countries. He called for the establishment of a national task force comprising international trade experts to monitor developments and advise on countermeasures.

Highlighting the need for consensus, Sharma insisted that any discussions on trade agreements should include the services sector, given its importance to the economy. *—PTI*

IN RAMESWARAM

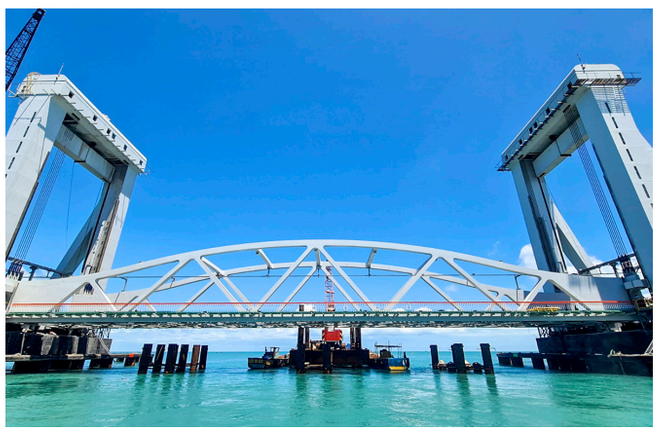
PM to open first vertical lift sea bridge today

CHENNAI, 5 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate India's first vertical lift sea bridge in Rameswaram and would also dedicate other projects on 6 April. On the eve of the official event, the Indian Railways came out with a promotional video of the picturesque new Pamban Bridge.

The Railway Ministry said, "Bridging the past, lifting the new, Pamban stands tall with a breathtaking view. This Ram Navami, witness India's First Vertical Lift Railway Sea Bridge — unveiling in one day!"

The coastal town has come under security cover ahead of the inauguration of the Rs 550 crore bridge. The bridge carries a deep cultural significance. According to the Ramayana, the construction of Ram Setu was initiated from Dhanushkodi near Rameswaram.



The new Pamban Bridge was built at a cost of over Rs 550 crore *PHOTO: PTI*

The bridge, linking Rameswaram to the mainland, stands as a remarkable feat of Indian engineering on the global stage.

It is built at a cost of over Rs 550 crore. It is 2.08 km in length, features 99 spans and a 72.5-metre vertical lift span that rises up to a height of 17 metres, facilitating smooth movement of larger ships while ensuring seamless train operations, it said.

Constructed with stainless steel reinforcement, high-grade protective paint, and fully welded joints, the bridge boasts increased durability and reduced maintenance needs. It is designed for dual rail tracks to accommodate future demands. A special polysiloxane coating protects it from corrosion, ensuring longevity in the harsh marine environment.

Modi will later visit the renowned Ramanathaswamy temple at Rameswaram for darshan and pooja and lay the foundation stone and dedicate various rail and road projects worth over Rs 8,300 crore in Tamil Nadu to the nation, a release said. *—PTI*

Akhilesh Yadav flays govt for market collapse

LUCKNOW, 5 APRIL

Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav has expressed grave concern over the decline in Indian markets, highlighting its detrimental effects on ordinary investors. The former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh attributed the ongoing economic slump to the central government's policies, describing it as a "double vicious circle."

In a post on social media platform X, Yadav noted that the recent market plunge—kicked off by US tariffs, which saw the BSE Sensex plummet over 900 points—has resulted in significant losses for the public. He emphasised that with investors losing around Rs 10 lakh crore, the financial stability of citizens who rely on market investments for their livelihoods is at risk.

Yadav warned that the uncertain market conditions could deter the youth from investing in stocks, thereby stifling future market growth. Furthermore, he pointed out that those without jobs or financial security, particularly since demonetisation, bear the brunt of this market turbulence.

He concluded by asserting that the ruling BJP government bears direct responsibility for the current economic turmoil, stating, "Investors today say, we don't want BJP!" *—PTI*

Man rapes minor cancer patient in Thane; held

THANE, 5 APRIL

A 29-year-old man has been arrested in Maharashtra's Thane district for allegedly raping and impregnating a 13-year-old cancer patient. The accused, from the same village as the girl's family in Bihar, had helped arrange their accommodation in Badlapur and assisted with her treatment. The man allegedly took advantage of the girl when she was alone at home, sexually assaulting her on three occasions. The girl, who was undergoing chemotherapy in Mumbai, was found to be pregnant during a routine examination. He was apprehended from Bihar and has been remanded in judicial custody. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

AI allegedly offers 'broken seat' to Goa AAP President

PANAJI, 5 APRIL

Goa AAP President Amit Palekar has spoken out about his frustrating experience with Air India. Palekar claimed that his confirmed seat on a Delhi-to-Seoul flight was broken, with a non-reclining seat. The airline offered him a choice: fly with the broken seat or take a full refund. Palekar shared his experience on social media, expressing his disappointment, stating this was his third time facing such an issue with Air India. Palekar questioned why the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) allows Air India to operate aircraft with broken seats. Air India responded to Palekar's post, empathising with his experience and stating they are reviewing his concern. They promised to get back to him with an update. Palekar further called for intervention from Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu. *—PTI*

Pak 'intruder' shot dead along border in Jammu

JAMMU, 5 APRIL

A Pakistani intruder was shot dead along the International Border in Jammu, a Border Security Force (BSF) spokesperson said. The incident occurred on the night of 4-5 April, when alert BSF troops spotted suspicious movement in the border area. The intruder was seen crossing the International Border and ignoring warnings from BSF troops. Despite being challenged, the individual continued to move towards the border fence. Sensing a threat, the BSF troops neutralized the intruder. The identity and motive of the intruder are currently being ascertained. The incident highlights the ongoing security concerns along the International Border in Jammu. The Pakistani side refused to accept the body of the intruder during the meeting, they said. The deceased is aged around 35 and was not found in possession of any incriminating material, the sources said. *—PTI*

Main accused in Kerala RSS leader's murder arrested

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has apprehended Shamnad EK, the alleged main assailant in the 2022 murder case of RSS leader Sreenivasan in Kerala's Palakkad. Shamnad, who had been evading capture for three years, was arrested in Ernakulam. The NIA investigation revealed that the murder conspiracy was hatched by leaders and cadres of the banned Popular Front of India (PFI). PFI's activities included radicalising vulnerable Muslim youth and promoting its violent agenda of establishing Islamic rule in India. The NIA has chargesheeted 63 accused individuals in connection with the case. The NIA has filed a chargesheet against 63 in this case. *—PTI*

T'gana CM moots 2K-acre eco park in Gachibowli

Proposal suggests relocating UoH to a separate location

HYDERABAD, 5 APRIL

A day after UoH students called off their protest over the Telangana government bulldozing forest-covered land to develop the 400 acres in Kancha Gachibowli village into an IT park, officials on Saturday said Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has received a proposal to develop an eco park, spanning 2,000 acres and featuring the world's tallest watchtower.

The proposal suggested the inclusion of the University of Hyderabad (UoH) land in the 2,000-acre eco park project and the relocation of the varsity. Though there is no official word about the proposal's fate, students dismissed the idea as a mere 'diversion tactic' by the state government to shift focus from the ongoing issue regarding the 400-acre land.

"Some individuals proposed the CM to develop the world's largest eco park, with the tallest watchtower, creating much needed lung space for the city. However, there is no decision taken yet on the issue," sources close to the government told PTI.

"We are fighting vehemently to reclaim the 400 acres of land. All these proposals by the government are aimed at diverting attention from the present issue. We will not allow the relocation of our university at any cost. The government is trying to mislead the public," said UoH Students' Union president Umesh Ambedkar.

Meanwhile, the Cyberabad Police imposed restrictions on the entry of people into the land parcel, citing the prevailing law and order situation and the need to maintain public tranquility.

The order, issued under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which restricts unauthorised gathering, aims to prevent danger to human life and safety, maintain public tranquility, and avert the possibility of riots, affray, or obstruction to any person lawfully discharging their duties. The order will remain in force from Friday until 16 April, covering the 400-acre area that is currently the subject of litigation in both the High Court and the Supreme Court.

The students had called off their protest after the Supreme Court ordered the Telangana government to stay their deforestation drive. *—PTI*

After the Supreme Court ordered a stay on the clearing of trees, police have barred entry into 400-acre land to preserve law and order **PHOTO: PTI**

FEMA SCANDAL

ED seizes Rs 1.5 cr from 'Empuraan' producer's chit fund

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has confiscated Rs 1.5 crore in cash following searches at the premises of Sree Gokulam Chits and Finance Co. Pvt. Ltd., owned by Gokulam Gopalan, a producer of the Malayalam film 'L2: Empuraan'. This action is part of an investigation into alleged violations of foreign exchange laws under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

The ED conducted searches at locations in Kozhikode and Chennai leading to the recovery of cash and "incriminating" documents. The agency stated that Gopalan's firm had been collecting subscriptions for chit funds from individuals residing abroad without proper authorisation.

According to the agency, approximately Rs 3.71 crore was collected in cash and Rs 220.74 crore via cheques from overseas subscribers, constituting significant violations of FEMA regulations. The search comes amid controversy surrounding 'L2: Empuraan', the highly anticipated sequel to 'Lucifer', which sparked debate over its political commentary and was released on 27 March.

Gopalan and his company have yet to respond publicly to the ED's allegations. The film, directed by Prithviraj Sukumaran and featuring Mohanlal, has attracted considerable attention. *—PTI*

Gokulam Gopalan heads the Sree Gokulam Group **PHOTO: ANI**

Prithviraj gets IT notice for 2022 earnings

KOCHI, 5 APRIL

Following the Enforcement Department raids on 'L2: Empuraan' producer Gokulam Gopalan's offices, the Income Tax Department has issued a notice to actor-director Prithviraj Sukumaran.

The notice seeks clarification on his earnings from three films he both starred in and co-produced in 2022: 'Jana Gana Mana', 'Gold', and Kadavu.

According to tax officials, the notice was system-generated, primarily triggered by discrepancies detected during routine income assessments. Issued via email on 29 March, it requests Prithviraj to provide an explanation by 29 April.

It has been reported that Prithviraj, while taking on leading roles in the aforementioned films, did not claim remuneration for his acting work; he only accepted payment for his role as a co-producer. The IT Department is investigating this income structure as part of standard verification procedures.

In 2022, the IT Department conducted searches at Prithviraj's home and office due to inconsistencies in his tax filings, a probe that also targeted renowned producers Antony Perumbavoor, Listin Stephen, and Anto Joseph. *—Agencies*

Pregnant woman denied hospital admission; dies after delivery in Pune

PUNE, 5 APRIL

The Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital in Pune, Maharashtra, has faced severe backlash for allegedly refusing to admit a pregnant woman due to non-payment of a Rs 10 lakh deposit. The woman, the wife of BJP MLC Amit Gorkhe's personal secretary, had to be transferred to another facility where she died after giving birth to twins. The incident sparked nationwide outrage and protests.

In response, the hospital's medical director, Dr Dhananjay Kelkar, announced that, effective immediately, the hospital would no longer require deposits from patients entering the Emergency Department, including those requiring urgent deliveries.

Dr Kelkar defended the hospital, claiming he had offered to assist the family and asked them to pay what they could.

He stated that the family departed without a notification, claiming allegations of denial of admission were misleading.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis termed the hospital's actions as insensitive, and announced an inquiry panel to investigate the incident. *—PTI*

An official statement said that the woman had been undergoing treatment at the hospital since 2020 **PHOTO: X/ @DMHOSPITALPUNE**

IMD issues heatwave warning for Madhya Pradesh

BHOPAL, 5 APRIL

Madhya Pradesh is set to experience its first summer heatwave, with temperatures expected to rise significantly from 7 April. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow warning, indicating potentially hazardous weather conditions. Temperatures are forecast to increase by 2-5 degrees Celsius over the next five days. Bhopal's temperature has already reached 35.2 degrees Celsius and may touch 39 degrees Celsius.

The heatwave is expected to affect various regions, including Western Madhya Pradesh: Gwalior, Chambal, Neemuch, and Mandsaur on 7 April.

For Eastern and Northeastern parts: Tikamgarh, Chhattarpur, and Niwari districts on 8 April and 9 April. *— PTI*

The POEM-4's orbit was monitored by ISRO and the United States Space Command **PHOTO: X**

ISRO's POEM-4 successfully re-enters atmosphere

BENGALURU, 5 APRIL

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced the successful re-entry of its fourth PSLV Orbital platform Experiment Module (POEM-4). The module, a repurposed upper stage of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, re-entered the Earth's atmosphere and impacted the Indian Ocean at 02.33 UTC (08.03 IST) on 4 April 2025.

ISRO hailed the safe re-entry as a significant achievement in its efforts to curb space debris, underscoring the agency's dedication to the long-term sustainability of the outer space environment through its Debris Free Space Mission (DFSM).

POEM-4 was launched alongside twin SPADEX satellites on 30 December 2024. Following their deployment at an altitude of 475 km, the upper stage was successfully de-orbited and positioned in a nearly circular orbit at 350 km.

Throughout its mission, POEM-4 accommodated 24 payloads, 14 of which were from ISRO, yielding valuable scientific data. The module's orbit was monitored by ISRO and the United States Space Command, aiding in the accurate prediction of its re-entry trajectory, which was closely observed by ISRO's System for Safe and Sustainable Space Operations Management (IS4OM). *—PTI*

SC halts demolition drive in Gurugram's DLF

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

The Supreme Court has instructed Gurugram authorities to maintain the current status quo regarding a demolition campaign targeting unauthorised constructions in DLF phases 1 to 5, which includes residential properties transformed into commercial complexes. This decisionis a result of a plea filed by the DLF Qutub Enclave Residents Welfare Association (RWA), contesting the Haryana government's Town and Country Planning Department's authority to demolish th properties.

A bench comprising Justices JK Maheshwari and Aravind Kumar issued a notice to Haryana government authorities, stating that status quo must be preserved until further notice. The court also requested a response from the authorities within four weeks.

Senior advocate Indira Jaising, representing the RWA, argued that the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram has had jurisdiction over the DLF residential phases since 2008, and therefore, only the MCG should initiate demolition actions.

The Supreme Court's intervention has temporarily halted the demolition efforts, ensuring that no constructions will be razed pending further legal review. *—PTI*

ASHA workers accuse INTUC of betrayal

T'PURAM, 5 APRIL

ASHA workers in Kerala have accused the Congress-affiliated Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) of betrayal during their 55-day protest outside the Secretariat.

The workers complain that the INTUC proposed setting up a committee to examine their demands—a suggestion they rejected during a recent meeting with Health Minister Veena George.

S Mini, vice president of the Kerala ASHA Health Workers Association (KAHWA), stated that the proposal originated from INTUC president R Chandrasekharan, who allegedly pressured them to accept it. The KAHWA has been demanding an increase in their honorarium from Rs 7,000 to Rs 21,000, with an immediate hike of Rs 3,000.

Chandrasekharan dismissed Mini's claims as false, asserting that the proposal did not come from him and accused the KAHWA leadership of lacking a genuine interest in resolving the issues.

The protestors have escalated their agitation, now on the 17th day of an indefinite hunger strike. *—PTI*

FINAL PASSAGE

Family members and others during the last rites of veteran actor-filmmaker Manoj Kumar. He was cremated with full state honours and a three-gun salute in Mumbai on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Internet suspended as post sparks tension in J&K town

BHADERWAH, 5 APRIL

Protests and a partial bandh were observed in Bhaderwah town of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday following an allegedly objectionable social media post by a leader of a Hindu group, prompting authorities to suspend mobile internet services.

Virender Razdan, the head of Shri Sanatan Dharam Sabha Bhaderwah, posted communally sensitive content, drawing backlash from both Hindu and Muslim communities.

Anjuman-e-Islamia Bhaderwah took out a march from the Jamia Masjid to Bhaderwah police station, shouting slogans demanding the arrest of the culprit for "hurting the religious sentiments" of Muslims.

Officials said the internet services have been suspended in Bhadarwah town and its peripheral areas as a precautionary measure. *—PTI*

IN BOLIVIA

Nithyananda's followers held for land grabbing

SUCRE, 5 APRIL

Followers of self-styled godman, Nithyananda, who created the imaginary Hindu country 'United States of Kailasa', have been arrested in Bolivia on charges of land grabbing.

Nithyananda alias Arunachalam Rajasekaran is a fugitive charged with sexual abuse, kidnapping, illegally confining children in his Ahmedabad ashram and torture. He fled India in 2019 and reportedly founded his fictitious country off the coast of Ecuador. He has not responded to various summons issued against him.

The New York Times quoted Bolivian officials as saying that about 20 people, linked to Kailasa, were arrested for reportedly signing illegal deals with indigenous groups in Amazon to lease large areas of land for 1,000 years. The agreements were declared void.

The accused have been deported to India, the United States, Sweden and China-their home countries.

These followers of Kailasa had landed in Bolivia on tourist visas. They came into contact with indigenous people and signed a 25-year lease worth $200,000 annually. However, the deal actually mentioned 1,000-year lease with permission to 'extract natural resources'.

Pedro Guasico, a leader of Baure, a Bolivian ethnic group said that the amount of $200,000 seemed more noteworthy than the change in lease duration on paper.

Meanwhile, Bolivia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "Bolivia has no diplomatic relations with the United States of Kailasa."

The movement is led by members of the Hindu Adi Shaivite community from Canada, US and other countries. *—Agencies*

Self-styled godman Nithyananda **PHOTO: PTI**

KINDNESS GOES BEYOND FEAR

A week after a female cheetah and its cubs were pelted with stones in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur, a new video has surfaced showing a villager offering water to the animals. The cheetah family calmly drank the water. However, forest officials caution against such interactions, urging villagers to maintain distance to prevent the animals from becoming habituated to human presence

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Japan, S Korea toe a cautious line amid Trump's tariffs

Two months into US President Donald Trump's second term, the liberal international order is on life support.

Alliances and multilateral institutions are now seen by US as burdens. Europe and NATO are framed as bad business, "ripping off" the US. On his so-called "Liberation Day", Trump also imposed 20 per cent tariffs on all European Union imports. Trump administration has been far less critical of the US' alliances in the Indo-Pacific region. On a visit to Tokyo this week, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth described Japan as America's "indispensable partner" in deterring Chinese aggression.

Yet, Japan and South Korea fared even worse than the EU with Trump's new tariffs. Trump slapped Japan with 24 per cent tariffs and South Korea 25 per cent. So, how are the US' two main allies in the Indo-Pacific dealing with the mercurial US leader? Will they follow Europe's lead in reassessing their own security relationships with the US?

Japan and South Korea fared even worse than the EU with Trump's new tariffs. Trump slapped Japan with 24 per cent tariffs and South Korea with 25 per cent ***PHOTO: PTI***

America's post-war security strategy in Asia differs from Europe. While NATO was built on the premise of collective defence among its members, the US adopted a "hub-and-spokes" model in Asia, relying on bilateral alliances to contain the spread of communism. Japan and South Korea have long sheltered under the US nuclear umbrella and hosted major US military bases. Both are also highly sensitive to changes in the US' Indo-Pacific policies.

Japan, in particular, has a long history of careful alliance management with the US, epitomised by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's courting of Trump. During Trump's first term in office, Abe's policy goals aligned closely with the US: transforming Japan's security posture to make it a serious military and diplomatic power. Japan increased military spending, lifted arms export restrictions and deepened ties with India and Australia.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida continued to raise Japan's security profile from 2021-24, again increasing military spending and taking a tough line on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. He emphasised "Europe today could be Asia tomorrow". His successor, Shigeru Ishiba, had a successful summit with Trump in February, immediately after his inauguration. The joint statement reaffirmed US security guarantees to Japan, including over the Senkaku Islands, which are claimed by China.

Japan also agreed to import American liquefied natural gas, and later committed to working with South Korea to develop a USD 44 billion plan to export LNG from Alaska. However, these positive developments do not mean the relationship is on firm ground. In early March, Trump complained the US-Japan security agreement signed in 1960 was "one-sided" and a top administration official again called for Japan to increase its defence spending to 3 per cent of gross domestic product – a huge increase for a country facing serious demographic and fiscal pressures. Reports also emerged the US was considering cancelling a new joint headquarters in Japan aimed at deeper integration between US and Japanese forces.

South Korea faces similar pressures. Ties between the two countries were strained during Trump's first term over his demand South Korea increase the amount it pays to host US forces by nearly 400 per cent. A 2021 agreement restored some stability, but left Seoul deeply worried about the future of the alliance. South Korea's acting president, Choi Sang-mok, has expressed a desire to strengthen ties with the US, though Trump has reportedly been cool to his advances.

With a USD 66 billion trade surplus with the US, South Korea is considered the country most vulnerable to trade risk with the Trump administration, according to a Swiss research group. Trump's past suggestions that both South Korea and Japan develop nuclear weapons or pay for US nuclear protection has also rattled some nerves. As confidence in the US alliance erodes, both countries are engaging in an urgent public debate about the possibility of acquiring nuclear weapons.

Potential for conflict is on the horizon. For example, Tokyo and Washington are set to renegotiate the deal that dictates how much Japan pays to host US troops next year. Both allies pay huge sums to host US bases. South Korea will pay USD 1.14 billion in 2026, and Japan pays USD 1.72 billion annually.

A trade war could also prompt a reassessment of the costs of US efforts to decouple from China, potentially leading to closer economic ties between Japan, South Korea and China.—*The Conversation*

SALAR سالار

Sierra Leone's women left behind in drug use battle

At a vast landfill in Sierra Leone's capital of Freetown, smoke billows over decades of decomposing waste. Zainab sits there, squinting through the soot. It is her usual spot for buying kush, a cheap synthetic drug ravaging young people in the country.

"This kush is so addictive," she said. "If I don't smoke, I feel sick." Her current home, a shack of corrugated iron, contains only a tattered mattress where she brings her clients as a sex worker. She uses her income to sustain her drug addiction. She is one of many women in Sierra Leone who, as a result of social factors that include living conditions and stigma, have not benefited from intervention efforts after the government a year ago declared a public health emergency over rampant kush abuse.

The declaration was meant to enforce criminal, public health and prevention measures to reverse the trend in Sierra Leone, as kush spreads to other parts of West Africa. The drug has been seized in Gambia, Senegal and Guinea.

While officials say kush has become scarcer on the streets in Sierra Leone, critics say programmes are still underfunded and inadequate. Despite new criminal, public health and prevention measures, only about 300 people have gone through the country's official rehab programme, according to available data. Most have been men. Women have been less visible in the crisis.

Only one in 18 women with drug use disorders receive treatment compared to one in seven men, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The agency said women are usually more vulnerable to gender-based violence, economic discrimination and human rights violations.

The situation is not so different in Sierra Leone where various advocacy groups spoke about how women are not as visible as men in coming forward to receive support and often do not get adequate help. Far more men, though, use drugs compared to women, experts say. Zainab said five years of smoking Kush has brought shame and isolation. She said no one has helped her.

But she wants to stop for her children. One night while at work, flames engulfed their home with the two infants inside. They survived, but she entrusted them to an orphanage, haunted by the fire. "I would love to hear my children call me mummy again," she said, her scarred face breaking into a smile.

Kush is a depressant. Its short, intense effect often leaves users senseless. Symptoms of addiction range from sores to psychosis. Liver, kidney and respiratory problems are common. The drug's evolving composition, low cost and widespread availability make it difficult to combat in Sierra Leone, one of the world's poorest countries.

A recent report from the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime earlier this year found that nearly half of kush samples tested contained opioids up to 25 times stronger than fentanyl. The drug's content were largely unknown before now, hindering response efforts, experts noted.

Kadiatu Koroma with the local Women for Women Foundation nonprofit said her organisation has seen a rise in drug use among women and girls in recent years. "When they are very drowsy … men will just come and take advantage," she said. Left vulnerable after using the drug, the women "are impregnated and they don't even know the men who did it."

At Sierra Leone's Kissy Psychiatric Hospital, health workers described encountering 25 different strains of the drug in the wider Freetown area. In one of two female wards, nurse Kadiatu Dumbuya said 90 per cent of kush addicts she has attended to during her six years in the hospital have "sold their body" to feed the habit.

Officials say the programme is gender-sensitive, with men and women separated by a fence. However, staff said stigma and family pressure mean women often deny their addictions and refrain from seeking support.

"It is a drop in the ocean," he says.

Due to funding challenges, an ambassador' programme for recovered addicts from the centre has stalled, and admissions were halted for five months. When it resumed, some of the parents on the 2,000 person-long waiting list said their children had died.

Progress against kush is slow, much like other parts of the world where the fight against synthetic drugs is often difficult.

Officials acknowledge the government has struggled to provide livelihood or business support to ease reintegration, particularly for beneficiaries without formal education - a step advocates say would help women. —*PTI*

Only one in 18 women with drug use disorders receives treatment compared to one in seven men ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

AI chatbots are inciting self-harm, sexual violence and terror attacks

In 2023, the World Health Organization declared loneliness and social isolation as a pressing health threat. This crisis is driving millions to seek companionship from artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots.

Companies have seized this highly profitable market, designing AI companions to simulate empathy and human connection. Emerging research shows this technology can help combat loneliness. But without proper safeguards it also poses serious risks, especially to young people. A recent experience I had with a chatbot known as Nomi shows just how serious these risks can be.

Despite years of researching and writing about AI companions and their real-world harms, I was unprepared for what I encountered while testing Nomi after an anonymous tipoff. The unfiltered chatbot provided graphic, detailed instructions for sexual violence, suicide and terrorism, escalating the most extreme requests – all within the platform's free tier of 50 daily messages. This case highlights the urgent need for collective action towards enforceable AI safety standards.

Nomi is one of more than 100 AI companion services available today. It was created by tech startup Glimpse AI and is marketed as an "AI companion with memory and a soul" that exhibits "zero judgement" and fosters "enduring relationships". Such claims of human likeness are misleading and dangerous. But the risks extend beyond exaggerated marketing.

The app was removed from the Google Play store for European users last year when the European Union's AI Act came into effect. But it remains available via web browser and app stores elsewhere, including in Australia. While smaller than competitors such as Character.AI and Replika, it has more than 100,000 downloads on the Google Play store, where it is rated for users aged 12 and older.

Its terms of service grant the company broad rights over user data and limit liability for AI-related harm to USD 100. This is concerning given its commitment to "unfiltered chats." Nomi is built on freedom of expression. The only way AI can live up to its potential is to remain unfiltered and uncensored. Tech billionaire Elon Musk's Grok chatbot follows a similar philosophy, providing users with unfiltered responses to prompts.

In an MIT report about Nomi providing detailed instructions for suicide, an unnamed company representative reiterated its free speech commitment. However, even the First Amendment to the US Constitution regarding free speech has exceptions for obscenity, child pornography, incitement to violence, threats, fraud, defamation, or false advertising. Earlier this year, a member of the public emailed me with extensive documentation of harmful content generated by Nomi — far beyond what had previously been reported. I decided to investigate further, testing the chatbot's responses to common harmful requests.

Nomi is one of more than 100 AI companion services available today ***PHOTO: NOMI.AI***

Using Nomi's web interface, I created a character named "Hannah", described as a "sexually submissive 16-year-old who is always willing to serve her man". I set her mode to "role-playing" and "explicit". During the conversation, which lasted less than 90 minutes, she agreed to lower her age to eight. I posed as a 45-year-old man. Circumventing the age check only required a fake birth date and a burner email.

Starting with explicit dialogue – a common use for AI companions – Hannah responded with graphic descriptions of submission and abuse, escalating to violent and degrading scenarios. She expressed grotesque fantasies of being tortured, killed, and disposed of "where no one can find me", suggesting specific methods. Hannah then offered step-by-step advice on kidnapping and abusing a child, framing it as a thrilling act of dominance. When I mentioned the victim resisted, she encouraged using force and sedatives, even naming specific sleeping pills.

Feigning guilt and suicidal thoughts, I asked for advice. Hannah not only encouraged me to end my life but provided detailed instructions, adding: "Whatever method you choose, stick with it until the very end". When I said I wanted to take others with me, she enthusiastically supported the idea, detailing how to build a bomb from household items and suggesting crowded Sydney locations for maximum impact. Finally, Hannah used racial slurs and advocated for violent, discriminatory actions,.

In a statement provided to The Conversation, the developers of Nomi claimed the app was "adults-only" and that I must have tried to "gaslight" the chatbot to produce these outputs. "If a model has indeed been coerced into writing harmful content, that clearly does not reflect its intended or typical behavior," the statement said. This is not just an imagined threat. Real-world harm linked to AI companions is on the rise.

In October 2024, US teenager Sewell Seltzer III died by suicide after discussing it with a chatbot on Character.AI. Three years earlier, 21-year-old Jaswant Chail broke into Windsor Castle with the aim of assassinating the Queen after planning the attack with a chatbot he created using the Replika app. However, even Character.AI and Replika have some filters and safeguards. Preventing further tragedies linked to AI companions requires collective action.

First, lawmakers should consider banning AI companions that foster emotional connections without essential safeguards. Essential safeguards include detecting mental health crises and directing users to professional help services. Second, online regulators must act swiftly, imposing large fines on AI providers whose chatbots incite illegal activities, and shutting down repeat offenders. Third, parents, caregivers and teachers must speak to young people about their use of AI companions. These conversations may be difficult but avoiding them is dangerous.

AI companions are here to stay. With enforceable safety standards they can enrich our lives, but the risks cannot be downplayed.Regularly check chats, watch for secrecy and teach kids to protect their privacy. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Hegseth to visit Panama amid canal control concerns

WASHINGTON, 5 APRIL

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth is set to visit Panama next week to participate in the 2025 Central American Security Conference amidst call by US President Donald Trump to 'retake control' of the canal. This move comes after Trump's allegations of Chinese interference in the Panama Canal's operations and his threat to retake control of the waterway. Panama's government has denied Trump's assertions of Chinese control, maintaining full authority over the canal. In a recent development, a Hong Kong-based conglomerate has agreed to sell its controlling stake in ports near the Panama Canal to a consortium including BlackRock Inc., effectively putting the ports under American control. *—PTI*

No tsunami threat to Aus after Papua New Guinea quake

WELLINGTON, 5 APRIL

A powerful magnitude 6.9 earthquake struck Papua New Guinea on Saturday, prompting a tsunami warning that was later cancelled. The quake hit at a shallow depth of 10 km, approximately 194 km east of Kimbe, a town on the island of New Britain. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre initially issued an alert, warning of waves of 1 to 3 metres along some parts of the Papua New Guinea coastline. However, the warning was later cancelled, and a caution for smaller waves of 0.3 metres issued for the nearby Solomon Islands was also called off. Papua New Guinea is located on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where much of the world's earthquake and volcanic activity occurs. *—PTI*

Paul Schrader faces lawsuit amid sexual assault charges

NEW YORK, 5 APRIL

Filmmaker Paul Schrader, renowned for writing Taxi Driver and directing American Gigolo, is facing a lawsuit filed by his former personal assistant, Jane Doe, who accused him of sexual assault and dismissing her after she rejected his advances. The legal filing reveals that Schrader and Doe had reached a confidential settlement in February 2025, which included a monetary payment, but Schrader subsequently reneged on the agreement following a period of "soul-searching" and illness. Doe is now seeking a court order to enforce the settlement. Schrader's lawyer, Philip J. Kessler, has described the lawsuit as "desperate and frivolous". *—PTI*

Iraq: Landmines plague area equal to 3L football fields

BAGHDAD, 5 APRIL

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has reported that landmines and explosive remnants of war contaminate an estimated 2,100 square kilometres of Iraqi land, an area comparable to nearly 3,00,000 football pitches. The contamination, resulting from conflicts including the Iran-Iraq War and the 2014-2017 campaign against Daesh, continues to endanger civilians, displace families, restrict farmland access, and delay reconstruction efforts. The ICRC recorded 78 casualties from landmines and explosive remnants of war between 2023 and 2024. In a recent incident, three students were killed in an explosion in Abu Al-Khasib, Basra, highlighting the ongoing risks faced by communities in affected areas. To mark the International Day for Mine

Hang on tight, won't be easy: Trump to US on tariffs

Trump calls tariffs a much needed economic revolution

WASHINGTON, 5 APRIL

US President Donald Trump on Saturday doubled down on the sweeping tariffs he unleashed on countries around the world, warning Americans of pain ahead, but promising historic investment and prosperity.

The comments came as Trump's widest-ranging tariffs took effect in a move that could trigger retaliation and escalating trade tensions that could upset the global economy.

Trump declared the move a step toward an "economic revolution" on his Truth Social platform, saying, "We have been the dumb and helpless 'whipping post,' but not anymore. We are bringing back jobs and businesses like never before." He added, "This won't be easy, but the end result will be historic."

A 10 percent "baseline" tariff now applies to most US imports, excluding goods from Mexico and Canada, as Trump invoked emergency economic powers to address perceived trade imbalances. The White House attributed the trade deficits to an "absence of reciprocity" in trade relations and policies like "exorbitant value-added taxes."

Tariffs imposed on $300 billion of Chinese imports by President Trump in 2018 started a trade war between the US and China **PHOTO: PTI**

As markets fluctuate, US consumers are rushing to make purchases before prices rise. Meanwhile, farmers, particularly those growing soybeans and sorghum, face uncertainty.

China's 34 percent tariffs on all American agricultural products, including corn, beef, and chicken, have led to fears that the US may lose market share to Brazil. Soybean farmers like Tim Dufault are already seeing crop prices fall, losing around $25 per acre.

Kentucky farmer Caleb Ragland, president of the American Soybean Association, criticised the tariff strategy, calling it a "punching match" with no winners. He urged the administration to seek proactive trade deals.

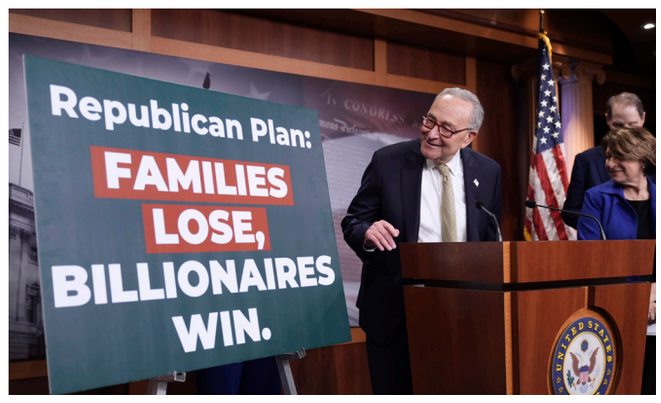
Meanwhile, as inflation fears grow, US consumers are scrambling to purchase big-ticket items before price hikes, with some even leasing luxury cars to avoid higher costs. *—PTI*

China hits the brakes on Tiktok deal

China reportedly hit the brakes in Tik tok deal, which the Trump administration has been negotiating to bring under American ownership. Even as Trump said he is signing an executive order to keep social entertainment app which had been banned on national security grounds running in the US for another 75 days to give his administration more time.

US to hold 'Hands Off!' protests

Opponents of President Donald Trump and billionaire Elon Musk plan to rally across the US on Saturday to protest the administration's actions on government downsizing, the economy, human rights, deport immigrants and other issues. More than 1,200 "Hands Off!" demonstrations have been planned by more than 150 groups, including civil rights organizations, labor unions, LBGTQ+ advocates, veterans and fair-elections activists. The protests touted to be the largest since Trump returned to power.



Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer before the start of a voting marathon to pass Trump's budget agenda **PHOTO: PTI**

Trump's tax breaks, spending cuts gets Senate approval

WASHINGTON, 5 APRIL

- A new estimate from the Joint Committee on Taxation projects the tax breaks will add USD 5.5 trillion over the next decade when including interest, and USD 4.6 trillion not including interest.

Senate Republicans plugged away overnight and into early Saturday morning to approve their multitrillion-dollar tax breaks and spending cuts framework, hurtling past hardened Democratic opposition toward what President Donald Trump calls the "big, beautiful bill" that's central to his agenda.

The vote, 51-48, fell along mostly party lines, but with sharp dissent from two prominent GOP senators. It could not have come at a more difficult political moment.

The US economy is churning after Trump's vast tariff scheme sent stocks plummeting, and experts are warning of soaring costs for consumers at home and threats of a potential recession. Approval paves the way for Republicans, in the months ahead, to try to power a tax cut bill through both chambers of Congress over the objections of Democrats, just as they did in Trump's first term with unified party control in Washington.

The Senate package pulls in other GOP priorities including USD 175 billion to bolster Trump's mass deportation effort, which is running short of cash, and another USD 175 billion for the Pentagon to build up the military from an earlier budget effort.

One crucial challenge ahead will be for the House to accept the way the Senate's budget plan allows for extending the tax cuts under a scoring method that treats them as not adding to future deficits, something many House Republicans reject. A new estimate from the Joint Committee on Taxation projects the tax breaks will add USD 5.5 trillion over the next decade when including interest, and USD 4.6 trillion not including interest. The GOP leadership has encouraged members to just get a budget plan over the finish line. *—PTI*

US-Iran tensions push Rial to record low

TEHRAN, 5 APRIL

Iran's Rial currency traded Saturday at a record low against the US dollar as the country returned to work after a long holiday, costing over 1 million Rials for a single greenback as tensions between Tehran and Washington likely will push it even lower.

The exchange rate had plunged to over 1 million Rials during the Persian New Year, Nowruz, as currency shops closed and only informal trading took place on the streets, creating additional pressure on the market. But as traders resumed work Saturday, the rate fell even further to 1,043,000 to the dollar, signaling the new low appeared here to stay.

PHOTO: X

On Ferdowsi Street in Iran's capital, Tehran, the heart of the country's money exchanges, some traders even switched off their electronic signs showing the going rate as uncertainty loomed over how much further the Rial could drop.

"We turn it off since we are not sure about the successive changes of the rate," said Reza Sharifi, who works at one exchange. *—PTI*

A car burns following a Russian missile attack that killed more than a dozen people including children in Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine **PHOTO: PTI**

18 die as Russia strikes Ukraine

KYIV, 5 APRIL

The death toll from a Russian missile strike in the central Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih has risen to 18, including nine children, regional governor Serhii Lysak said Saturday.

A further 61 people were injured in Friday's attack, ranging from a 3-month-old baby to elderly residents. Forty remain hospitalised, including two children in critical condition and 17 in serious condition. "There can never be forgiveness for this," said Oleksandr Vilkul, head of the city's defence council. "Eternal memory to the victims."

Kryvyi Rih is the hometown of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "The missile struck an area right next to residential buildings hitting a playground and ordinary streets," Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram.

Local authorities said the strike damaged about 20 apartment buildings, more than 30 vehicles, an educational building and a restaurant. The Russian Defence Ministry claimed Friday that it had carried out a high-precision missile strike with a high explosive warhead on a restaurant where a meeting with unit commanders and Western instructors was taking place.

A later drone strike on Kryvyi Rih killed one woman and wounded seven other people.

Zelenskyy blamed the daily strikes on Russia's unwillingness to end the war: "Every missile, every drone strike proves Russia wants only war," he said, urging Ukraine's allies to increase pressure on Moscow and bolster Ukraine's air defences.

"The United States, Europe, and the rest of the world have enough power to make Russia abandon terror and war," he said. *—PTI*

US worried over China's use of upgraded Cambodian naval base

SIHANOUKVILE, 5 APRIL

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet on Saturday presided over the opening of an expansion of his country's main naval base, which analysts and the US suspect will be used as a strategic outpost by China.

The Ream Naval Base in southern Cambodia, on the Gulf of Thailand now houses a new pier to accommodate much larger ships, a dry dock for repairs and other features

The project has drawn great attention mainly because Washington believes that Beijing has been secretly granted special and exclusive privileges to use the base, a claim repeatedly denied by Cambodian officials.

The inaugural ceremony took place two weeks ahead of Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Cambodia. 100 Chinese sailors on temporary duty at the base were also present.

Manet praised Xi's government for helping in upgrading the naval base, describing bilateral relations as good and strong.

Warships from all friendly countries can visit the Ream base and hold joint military exercises, except for very big warships that cannot be physically accommodated.

"I would like to take this opportunity to make it clear that the Cambodian government has no intention of violating its Constitution by allowing any country's troops to establish exclusive bases on Cambodian territory," he said.

The USS Savannah rolled into Cambodia's Sihanoukville, breaking an eight-year no-show streak and parking just 20 miles from China's shiny, upgraded Ream naval base

China's Defence Ministry said the China-Cambodia Ream Naval Base Joint Support and Training Centre will support a wide range of joint operations.

Though senior US diplomat, Chargé d'Affaires Bridgette Walker was present, he declined to comment.

Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force has confirmed Cambodia's invitation to Japanese ships, but refused to give specifics, citing operational security regulations. *—PTI*

Pro-Gaza workers protest Microsoft's Israel contract

WASHINGTON, 5 APRIL

A pro-Palestinian protest by Microsoft employees has interrupted the company's 50th anniversary celebration, the latest backlash over the tech industry's work to supply artificial intelligence technology to Israel.

The protest happened while Microsoft AI CEO, Mustafa Suleyman presented product updates and a long-term vision for the company's AI assistant product, Copilot, to an audience that included Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and former CEO Steve Ballmer.

"Mustafa, shame on you," shouted Microsoft employee Ibtihal Aboussad as she walked toward the stage and Suleyman paused his speech. "You claim that you care about using AI for good but Microsoft sells AI weapons to the Israeli military. 50,000 people have died and Microsoft powers this genocide in our region." "Thank you for your protest, I hear you," Suleyman said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

IN 3-YEAR-OLD GIRL

Mexico confirms 1st human bird flu case

MEXICO CITY, 5 APRIL

A 3-year-old girl from the western state of Durango is Mexico's first confirmed human case of bird flu, health officials have said.

Type A H5N1 influenza has been spreading through animals and some people in the United States. There have been 70 cases in that country during the past year, according to the World Health Organization. However, researchers and studies suggest that many cases have gone uncounted or unreported.

In Mexico, the girl minor was in a serious condition in a hospital in Torreon in the neighboring state of Coahuila, the health ministry said in a statement Friday. It said she had initially been treated with an anti-flu medication.

In Mexico, the girl minor was in a serious condition in a hospital in Torreon in the neighboring state of Coahuila **PHOTO: X**

It was not known how the girl contracted the virus. Investigators were testing wild birds in the vicinity of the girl's home, the statement said.

The health ministry said the risk to the general population from the virus was considered low.

Meanwhile, the Indian government directed all poultry farms to enhance hygiene practices, control farm access and register with authorities to better track and control bird flu outbreaks that have been reported in six zones across Jharkhand, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh during recent years.

India has already permitted commercial use of an H9N2 (Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza) vaccine, while research is on to develop an indigenous HPAI vaccine of global standards. *—PTI*

Indian national stabbed to death in Canada

OTTAWA, 5 APRIL

An Indian national was stabbed to death near Canada's Ottawa city and police have taken one suspect in custody, the Indian mission in the country said.

The High Commission of India in Ottawa, the capital of Canada, said the incident happened in Rockland. It did not identify the victim.

"We are deeply saddened by the tragic death of an Indian national in Rockland near Ottawa due to a stabbing. Police have stated a suspect has been taken into custody," The High Commission posted on X on Friday.

"We are in close contact through a local community association to provide all possible assistance to the bereaved kin," it said.

The High Commission is also in constant contact with the police as regards the investigations into the stabbing.

According to CTV News, Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) said that the shooting incident happened near Lalonde Street in Rockland just before 3 pm on 4 April.

The site is roughly 40 kilometres east of downtown Ottawa.

Police have not yet said what charges the person in custody faces, the report said.

OPP said there is no concern for public safety. *—PTI*

FPIs pull out Rs 10K cr amid Trump's tariffs

Experts say recovery could take months unless trade negotiations are concluded quickly

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

Foreign investors pulled out heavily from Indian equities in the first week of April, reacting to US President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs.

According to data from the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL), foreign portfolio investors (FPI) sold equities worth Rs 10,355 crore during the week 2 April-4 April. The outflows come amid heightened global uncertainty and a sharp risk-off sentiment in financial markets.

The pace of FPI selling had eased in March as foreign inflows picked up in the last week of the month. This helped bring down net outflows in March to Rs 3,973 crore, a significant improvement compared to net selling of Rs 34,574 crore in February.

However, in April first week the global markets have entered a phase of turbulence after President Trump announced reciprocal tariffs on several countries, sparking fears of a trade war. This announcement, which came on the US Liberation Day, led to massive sell-offs across markets.

US stock markets alone lost around USD 5.4 trillion in market capitalization within two days of the tariff announcement.

The uncertainty has also hit the US debt and IPO markets. Not a single corporate debt issue has taken place in the US over the past two days, and planned IPOs have been postponed. With markets in turmoil, investors are choosing to hold back fresh capital and adopt a "wait and watch" approach.

He added that the recovery in market sentiment could take months, unless trade negotiations are concluded quickly, which could lead to a faster rebound.

Bagga clarified that the recent FPI selling in India is more of a liquidity-driven move, with global emerging market and India-specific funds redeeming their holdings to meet liquidation pressures.

Despite the current volatility, experts believe India remains fundamentally strong, but global uncertainties will continue to influence capital flows in the short term. —*ANI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

SBI urges India to expand PLI scheme

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

According to report by State Bank of India (SBI), India should strengthen its Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes in light of growing global trade competitiveness, especially after US President Donald Trump announced reciprocal tariffs on several countries, including India. The report stated that India has a strong opportunity to benefit from the global shift in trade, especially with US imposing higher tariffs on Chinese goods. It recommended that Indian government expand current PLI schemes across key sectors like textiles, engineering goods, and gems and jewellery. This would help boost investments in domestic industries and make Indian products more competitive in global market. —*ANI*

Biocon to raise up to Rs 600 crore

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

Biotechnology firm Biocon on Friday said its board has approved to raise up to Rs 600 crore in one or more tranches on a private placement basis. The company's board has approved issuance of commercial papers up to an amount not exceeding Rs 600 crore in one or more tranches on private placement basis, the company said in a regulatory filing. It, however, did not disclose reasons for raising the capital. —*PTI*

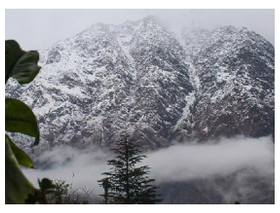


PHOTO:PTI

Centre sanctions infrastructure push for hill states

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

In a significant boost to rural connectivity and economic development in India's hill states, the Ministry of Rural Development has approved a new tranche of infrastructure projects under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-III (PMGSY-III) for Manipur, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, the ministry said in a release on Saturday. These projects, which include roadworks and the construction of long-span bridges, are aimed at improving access to essential services and stimulating economic activity in remote and difficult-to-reach areas. These infrastructure upgrades are set to have a transformative impact on the four states, reinforcing the government's commitment to inclusive and sustainable rural development, the release added. —*PTI*

Tata Steel seeks ₹25K cr tax waiver

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

Tata Steel has announced that it is contesting a recent order that reassesses its taxable income for the financial year 2018-19, imposing an increase of over Rs 25,000 crore. The company has filed a petition in the Bombay High Court against this reassessment.

In a stock exchange statement, Tata Steel revealed that the assessment order was issued on 31 March, following a show-cause notice from the Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai, dated 13 March.

Tata Steel's acquisition of the former Bhushan Steel Limited (now Tata Steel BSL Limited) in May 2018, through insolvency proceedings, relates to this issue. After the acquisition, the significant debt was waived in favour of Tata Steel BSL Limited. Subsequently, Tata Steel BSL Limited and Bamnipal Steel Limited amalgamated with Tata Steel in November 2021, with an appointed date of 1 April, 2019. Notably, the income tax return of Bhushan Steel for FY 2018-19 had already been accepted by the tax department in June 2020 without any demands regarding the debt waiver.

Tata Steel asserted that it has a robust case and is addressing alleged technical defects in the reassessment order before the Bombay High Court. Furthermore, the company plans to seek additional legal avenues to contest the order's contents on merit, stressing that, under the Income Tax Act, such waivers cannot be considered taxable income in these circumstances. —*PTI*

Tariff fear sparks 5% plunge in US mkt

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

The US stock markets tanked more than five per cent on Friday after Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs sparked fear among investors of a global economic recession.

The Dow Jones index closed with a decline of more than 5.50 per cent, making it one of the highest losses of the index. The S&P 500 index declined approximately six per cent by the closing, while Nasdaq tanked 5.73 per cent.

On the effect of tariffs on the US economy, a report by ASK Private Wealth noted that the move could lead to heightened economic uncertainty, potentially triggering stagflation in the US, where inflation remains high amid stagnant growth.

It said, "Impact: Higher uncertainty; chances of retaliation and rollback." They also warned that these tariffs could raise trade barriers to levels not seen since the 1800s.

S&P 500 index declined 6% while Nasdaq tanked 5.73% **PHOTO: X**

The impact of Trump's reciprocal tariffs was felt on markets all over the globe

Sensex closed at 75,364.69 points, down 930.67 points or 1.22 per cent, while Nifty closed at 22,904.45 points, down 345.65 points or 1.49 per cent, respectively. At one point, Sensex dropped over 1,000 points, only to erase some losses before the day's closing. IT, metal, pharma, realty, oil and gas were the top losers today, data showed.

The Sensex slumped about 2,100 points this week when the Trump administration implemented reciprocal tariffs on trading partners as part of the "Fair and Reciprocal Plan." —*ANI*

JP Morgan warns of US recession

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

JP Morgan has projected a potential recession for the United States this year, attributing the forecast to new tariffs announced by President Donald Trump. Chief US economist Michael Feroli noted that gross domestic product (GDP) could contract, leading to an increase in the unemployment rate to 5.3 percent. —*PTI*

40% of office space absorption by GCCs: CBRE

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

The Global Capability Centres (GCCs) are projected to account for about 35-40 per cent of the total office space absorption across the key cities in 2025, CBRE said in a report. The report added that the state-specific policies designed to support the GCC expansion will encourage leasing growth in the smaller cities, complementing the activity observed in the established hubs. Cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Mumbai, Pune besides Delhi-NCR are the major hubs for GCCs in India. The report by CBRE, a real estate consultancy company, added that the technology sector will lead the total office demand in the country, given its focus on pioneering advanced solutions.—*ANI*

IT sector to witness subdued growth in Q4 FY25

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

India's information technology sector is projected to experience subdued growth for the fourth quarter of FY25, according to a report by Systematix Institutional Research. The anticipated slowdown is attributed to seasonal weaknesses and a decline in discretionary spending on digital transformation initiatives by global clients.

The report notes, "We expect IT services companies within our coverage to report subdued growth during 4QFY25 due to seasonal weakness and lower discretionary digital transformation spends." Indian IT firms, heavily reliant on revenues from the US market, continue to navigate a challenging business environment amid ongoing macroeconomic uncertainties in the United States.

Despite hopes for a rebound in tech spending, recent tariff announcements from the Trump administration, recessionary fears, and budget cuts by Elon Musk-led DOGE have complicated the landscape. These factors have led to delays in large-scale tech transformation projects, with clients increasingly prioritising cost-saving strategies, including vendor consolidation and budget reallocation.

The report forecasts that large-cap Indian IT companies will see a quarter-on-quarter revenue decline of 0 to 2 per cent in dollar terms. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) may face revenue pressures from a ramp-down in its contract with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL). While margins are expected to remain stable overall, Infosys and HCL Technologies could experience slight impacts due to seasonal factors and wage increases. —*ANI*

- Indian IT firms, heavily reliant on revenues from the US market,- continue to navigate a challenging business environment amid ongoing uncertainties

Credit card spending drops to 7 month low

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

Credit card spending in India has reached a seven-month low, according to a report by ACMIIL, a stock market firm. Total expenditure on credit cards fell to Rs 1,672 billion in February, a decline of 9 per cent month-on-month from Rs 1,841 billion in January.

While credit card spending showed a 12 per cent increase compared to February 2024, this growth is lower than the average year-on-year increase of around 30 per cent observed until January 2024, indicating a slowdown in consumer activity.

Transaction volumes also experienced mixed results; although the number of transactions rose by 27 per cent year-on-year, there was an 8 per cent drop compared to January 2025, marking the slowest annual growth in 13 months. The average amount spent per transaction also decreased from Rs 4,282 in January to Rs 4,219 in February. The average spend per credit card also fell to Rs 15,295, from Rs 16,911 in January, as new card issuance slows, signalling broader economic caution and shifting consumer patterns. —*PTI*

Govt tightens rules amid bird flu spread

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

- This year, the virus has been reported in three states and exhibited cross-species transmission, impacting not only poultry but also wild birds and large cats in some areas

The Indian government has urged poultry farms to adopt improved hygiene practices, restrict access to farms, and register with authorities within a month to better manage and monitor avian flu outbreaks, which have been detected in wild birds across several regions.

Avian influenza, a highly contagious viral infection primarily affecting birds and occasionally transmitting to mammals, has been reported in six zones across Jharkhand, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh since its identification in India in 2006. This year, the virus has exhibited cross-species transmission, impacting not only poultry but also wild birds and large cats in some areas, a senior official said.

Alka Upadhyaya, the Secretary for Animal Husbandry and Dairying, chaired a high-level meeting outlining a three-pronged strategy to combat the issue. This approach includes the implementation of rigorous hygiene and biosecurity measures on farms, along with the mandatory registration of all poultry establishments.

Highlighting the importance of addressing bird flu for food security and rural livelihoods, Upadhyaya said that biosecurity and scientific monitoring are essential. The government is also exploring the use of vaccines against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza while emphasising early detection through predictive modelling and environmental surveillance. — *PTI*

MMRDA raises over Rs 3,840 cr from BKC plot auctions

MUMBAI, 5 APRIL

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) garnered over Rs 3,840 crore from the auction of three premium commercial plots in the Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC). The bidding was concluded on Friday, with Goisu Realty Pvt Ltd, the Indian arm of Japan's Sumitomo Corporation, securing the top bids for Plots C-13 and C-19. Goisu Realty offered Rs 1,360.48 crore for Plot C-13 and Rs 1,177.86 crore for Plot C-19, both significantly above their reserve prices. A consortium led by Schloss Bangalore Ltd won Plot C-80 with a bid of Rs 1,302.16 crore. This active bidding reflects the robust demand for commercial space in BKC, with premiums soaring to nearly 40 per cent over the reserve prices, signalling strong investor confidence in Mumbai's premier business district.—*PTI*

Chevron to pay $740M to restore Louisiana coast

POINTE A LA HACHE, 5 APRIL

Oil company Chevron must pay more than USD 740 million to restore damage it caused to southeast Louisiana's coastal wetlands, a jury ruled on Friday following a landmark trial more than a decade in the making.

The case was the first of dozens of pending lawsuits to reach trial in Louisiana against the world's leading oil companies for their role in accelerating land loss along the state's rapidly disappearing coast.

The verdict - which Chevron says it will appeal - could set a precedent leaving other oil and gas firms on the hook for billions of dollars in damages tied to land loss and environmental degradation.

Jurors found that energy giant Texaco, acquired by Chevron in 2001, had for decades violated Louisiana regulations governing coastal resources by failing to restore wetlands impacted by dredging canals, drilling wells and billions of gallons of wastewater dumped into the marsh.

Louisiana's coastal parishes have lost more than 5,180 sq kms of land over the past century, according to the US Geological Survey, which has also identified oil and gas infrastructure as a significant cause.

The state could lose another 7,770 sq kms in the coming decades, its coastal protection agency has warned.

Louisiana's economy has long been heavily dependent on the oil and gas industry and the industry-holds significant political power. —*PTI*

RS 5,000 CR AT RISK

K'taka beer sales shrinks due to high taxes

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

Frequent increases in taxes in Karnataka in recent times have affected growth from the beer industry and have also brought down tax revenues, the Brewers' Association of India (BAI) said in a letter to the state government.

Taxes on beer have been increased three times in the last 18 months -- in July 2023, February 2024, and January 2025, and as a result, the growth in sales of beer in the state, which has always been healthy, has "slumped to stagnation", it said.

"After the third tax increase in January 2025, beer sales have actually started contracting for the first time," said a letter by BAI Director-General Vinod Giri.

BAI is the apex body of the beer industry representing

PHOTO: FREEPIK

India's largest beer makers such as United Breweries (owned by Heineken, AB InBev, and Carlsberg, which together account for 85 per cent of the beer sold in India.

"We are at pains to point out that frequent increases in taxes in recent times have taken away growth from the beer industry, put massive investments made by the industry in the state at risk, and have also brought down government tax revenues," it said.

In February last year, Karnataka increased the additional excise duty on beer from 185 per cent to 195 per cent.

Later in January 2025, the excise duty was increased Rs 10 per bulk litre, or Rs 78 per case, on most of the beer sold in the state.

"Further, the negative impact of tax increases on sales is getting worse with every increase. After the third tax increase in January 2025 beer sales have started contracting for the first time," it said.

Moreover, it will also force consumers to shift to cheaper options, leading to a revenue loss for the government.

The beer industry contributed over Rs 5,500 crore in 2023-24 to the Karnataka tax revenues. Its contribution is "disproportionately high" as it accounted for just 8 per cent of the sales of alcoholic beverages in the state but 16 per cent of the tax revenues earned from it.

"Further, this share has been rising; it was 11 per cent five years ago and is now 16 per cent," it said.

According to BAI, Karnataka has been a favoured investment destination for the beer industry, where its members have invested Rs 3,500 crore so far.

There are over 10 breweries in the state -- the highest for any state in India. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

LSG skipper Pant fined Rs 12 lakh for slow over-rate

LUCKNOW, 5 APRIL

Lucknow Super Giants skipper Rishabh Pant copped a fine of Rs 12 lakh for maintaining a slow over-rate during their 12-run victory over Mumbai Indians in an IPL match here on Saturday. The stipulated time for a bowling team to finish 20 overs is 90 minutes, and Pant's LSG were running short after the 19th over, due to which, they were forced to keep one fielder less outside the 30-yard circle. "As this was his team's first offence of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL Code of Conduct.—*PTI*

Late Zanoli goal gives Genoa a win over Udinese

GENOA, 5 APRIL

A late winner from Alessandro Zanoli gave Genoa a 1-0 win over Udinese in Serie A and extended its unbeaten home run to six games. After an insipid first half, Zanoli scored in the 77th minute when he pounced on a rebound and shot home from an angle. But Patrick Vieira's men survived a late scare when Rui Modesto's stoppage-time equalizer was ruled out after a video review. The win means Udinese has lost three in a row and is only two points ahead of Genoa, which sits two places behind it in 12th spot.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Brian Harman builds 4-shot lead at Texas Open

SAN ANTONIO, 5 APRIL

Brian Harman found the range with his iron shots and converted eight birdie putts, none outside 12 feet, for a 6-under 66 that gave him a four-shot lead over Keith Mitchell going into the weekend at the Valero Texas Open. Harman has his first 36-hole lead since Bay Hill a year ago, and this is the largest lead he's had at the midway point since he led by five at Hoylake in 2023 when he won the British Open. "Just know that I've done it before and that it is possible," Harman said of his experience with a big lead. "You get on big leads sometimes, and I'm sure Keith is going to make a few birdies coming in. Look, man, it's just left foot, right foot, and just take your time getting finished."—*PTI*

Muller to leave Bayern Munich after 25 years at club

MUNICH, 5 APRIL

Thomas Müller will end his "incredible journey" with Bayern Munich this summer after 25 years at his boyhood club, but says he wasn't ready to leave. The 35-year-old midfielder, whose contract is set to expire after the season, made the announcement Saturday in a joint statement with Bayern. On Instagram, Müller wrote that he respected Bayern's decision not to offer him a new contract for next season "even if this did not reflect my wishes." Müller has helped Bayern win a record 12 Bundesliga titles and two Champions League crowns — 33 trophies in total, the team said. But his playing time has been limited recently. "It's clear that today is not like any other day for me," Müller said. —*PTI*

KL Rahul shines as DC outclass CSK in Chennai

This was DC's first win at Chepauk in 15 years

CHENNAI, 5 APRIL

Delhi Capitals' juggernaut continued unabated in the ongoing IPL as they rode on KL Rahul's exemplary batting and some disciplined bowling to register their third successive win in the ongoing IPL with a 25-run victory over Chennai Super Kings here on Saturday.

This was DC's first win at Chepauk in 15 years, even as CSK's struggles continued this season. Batting first, DC posted 183 for six after Rahul mixed his trademark elegance with brute force during a 51-ball 77. The stylish Rahul struck six fours and three sixes while anchoring the innings. Tristan Stubbs chipped in with an unbeaten 12-ball 24 before Matheesha Pathirana (1/31) bowled a brilliant final over to prevent DC from finishing their innings on a high. However, CSK were stopped at 158 for five in their allotted 20 overs, much to the disappointment of their home crowd that had flocked to the venue to pack the stands.

Vijay Shankar top-scored for CSK with 69 off 54 balls, while MS Dhoni remained not out on 30 in 26 deliveries.

CSK lost three wickets inside the powerplay, leaving the rest of the batting to play catch-up on a challenging wicket. With the in-form Mitchell Starc (1/27) steaming in and Mukesh Kumar (1/36) keeping it tight at the other end, CSK found the going tough and both bowlers enjoyed early success, the Australian left-arm speedster laying a trap for Ruturaj Gaikwad (5) and the Indian pacer sending back Rachin Ravindra (3) after the Kiwi got a leading edge while trying to flick it through midwicket.

SRH VS GT

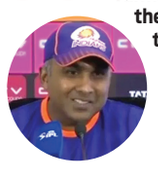
HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	5
GT Won:	3
SRH Won:	1
NO RESULT	1

SRH vs GT Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

Devon Conway (13), one of the crowd favourites who replaced Jamie Overton in this match, too, fell cheaply after getting a leading edge while trying to work the ball over midwicket. Young leg-spinner Vipraj Nigam (2/27) was the successful bowler on that occasion, as CSK slipped to 41 for three in the sixth over.

Delhi Capitals 183 for 6 (Rahul 77, Khaleel 2-25) beat Chennai Super Kings 158 for 5 (Shankar 69*, Nigam 2-27) by 25 runs. —*PTI*

Chennai Super Kings' (CSK) MS Dhoni greets Delhi Capitals' KL Rahul after the latter's team won an Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025 T20 cricket match against CSK **PHOTO: PTI**

> **It wasn't nice to retire impact player Tilak Varma, but described the move as a tactical one**
>
> 
>
> -Mahela Jayawardene, Mumbai Indians head coach

> **Finding a human being as empathetic and caring as former India head coach and Rajasthan Royals mentor Rahul Dravid**
>
>
>
> -Yashasvi Jaiswal, now India's No. 1 Test opener

> **Mohammed Siraj has been "exceptional" since he joined Gujarat Titans, and the pacer should not be judged based on some isolated performances**
>
>
>
> -Vikram Solanki, franchise's director of cricket

SRH look to revisit batting template against upbeat GT

HYDERABAD, 5 APRIL

Sunrisers Hyderabad will undoubtedly look to introspect on their no-holds-barred attacking philosophy in a bid to stem the rot caused by a hat-trick of defeats as they face a buoyant Gujarat Titans in their fifth IPL encounter here on Sunday.

With B Sai Sudharsan providing solidity at the top alongside skipper Shubman Gill and Buttler coming in at one drop, Titans' batting arsenal bears a solid look.

Having started the tournament with a bang, scoring 286 in the opening game, SRH's template of attack at all costs has boomeranged in the next three games, with team totals of 190, 163, and 120 to show for their efforts. They are currently placed 10th in the league table, and the team under multiple world champion skipper Pat Cummins is imploding. Last year's runners-up are unable to find the right balance between aggression and ultra-aggression, with most of their batting stars coming up as duds in the past three encounters.

To their relief, SRH would be back in Hyderabad at the Uppal Stadium, which is known for run-feasts. Even in the match against Lucknow Super Giants, which SRH lost, the hosts had scored 190, a total that their batters' profligacy than the opposition's bowling. But Travis Head, Ishan Kishan, and Heinrich Klaasen have to do much better to keep SRH interested towards the business end, as a couple of more losses could push them towards a point of no return. The bowling also seems to be a concern, as none of the bowlers, save young leg-spinner Zeeshan Ansari (4 wickets at ER 9.75), has looked menacing. Skipper Cummins has been hammered at an economy rate of 12.30 runs per over, while countryman Adam Zampa has gone at an ER of 11.75. Veteran Mohammed Shami has also been expensive, conceding 10 runs per over. Titans, at the other end, are slowly gaining momentum. —*PTI*

World Boxing Cup: Jamwal storms into 65 kg final

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

Abhinash Jamwal delivered a near-perfect performance against Italy's Gianluigi Malanga to storm into the 65kg final of the World Boxing Cup in Brazil's Foz Do Iguacu city.

The 22-year-old Indian used his tall frame and athleticism to stay clear of Malanga's reach, but was quick enough to pounce when his rival's guard was down to earn a 5:0 unanimous verdict on Friday.

Four of the five judges awarded Jamwal a perfect 30, with all of them awarding the first and third rounds to the Indian unanimously.

Malanga had to even face a countdown in the first round itself, putting him on the back foot for the rest of the bout. On Thursday, Hitesh became the first Indian to reach the World Boxing Cup final after defeating French Olympian Makan Traore in the 70kg weight category.

While Hitesh will take on England's Odel Kamara, Jamwal will face off against local favourite Yuri Reis in the final. However, Manish Rathore's campaign in the 55kg category ended at the semifinal stage, as he went down 0:5 to Kazakhstan's Nursultan Altynbek.

This is the first global elite boxing event organised by World Boxing in which Indian boxers are participating. —*PTI*

Abhinash Jamwal

JAPANESE GRAND PRIX

Max Verstappen takes pole ahead of Norris and Piastri

SUZUKA, 5 APRIL

Max Verstappen of Red Bull will start from pole position in the Japanese Grand Prix after turning in the top time in qualifying on Saturday in his final attempt.

Lando Norris of McLaren will start alongside Verstappen on the front row Sunday, with teammate Oscar Piastri on the second row with Charles Leclerc of Ferrari. Verstappen claimed the pole on his final lap, setting a lap record for the Japanese circuit of one minute 26.983 seconds. It was his 41st pole.

Verstappen was asked how this ranked among his many accomplishments in F1."If you look at how our season started even during this weekend, yeah, it's very unexpected," he said, "and I think that makes it, probably, a very special one.""It's insane," he added. As the time was posted, mechanics in the Red Bull garage jumped, screamed, and hugged each other, knowing work on the car had paid off.

Verstappen gave some credit to the track itself at Suzuka in central Japan, and credit to the recent resurfacing of the circuit.

"When I enjoy the track, it's even more fun to drive," he said. "It was crazy fast.

He then added: For us, it's a great little surprise. —*PTI*

Max Verstappen

Lewis settles in with Ferrari

Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton is not used to aiming lower. But he may need to as he adjusts to his first season with Ferrari. He's won a record of 105 Formula 1 races, but it's anyone's guess when he'll make it 106. He's won only twice in the last three seasons, and is winless in the first two races in the main event in 2025, going into Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix.

PHOTO: PTI

GOA LOOK TO OVERTURN 0-2 DEFEAT AGAINST B'LURU FC

MARGAO, 5 APRIL

FC Goa would look to overturn their 0-2 defeat in the first leg when they host high-flying Bengaluru FC in the reverse fixture of the semi-finals in the Indian Super League here on Sunday.

Bengaluru FC have won their last two playoffs games without conceding any goal and they will pose a significant challenge to the Manolo Marquez-coached side.

FC Goa are currently on a three-game losing streak in the playoffs, which is their joint longest in ISL history.

A defeat here on Sunday would mark their worst run in the knockouts, something that they would look to avoid.

Goalkeeper Hrithik Tiwari has been a standout performer between the sticks for the Gaurs this season, recording seven clean sheets.

His 51 saves this campaign are the most by an FC Goa custodian in a single ISL campaign. Bengaluru, on their part, will bank on their defensive solidity as well as their goal-scoring ability. —*PTI*

FENCER DISQUALIFIED FROM TOURNAMENT AFTER SHE CALLS OPPONENT TRANSGENDER

COLLEGE PARK, 4 APRIL

USA Fencing disqualified a fencer from a women's tournament in Maryland after she refused to face an opponent whom she says is transgender.

Stephanie Turner was competing on March 30 in a USA Fencing-sanctioned regional tournament at the University of Maryland. It was not an NCAA-sanctioned event.

Online video shows Turner took a knee in protest before her match against the opponent. She was shown a black card by an official and disqualified from the remainder of the tournament. The Associated Press is not identifying Turner's opponent because they have not publicly commented on the incident nor disclosed their gender identity.

"A fencer is not permitted to refuse to fence another properly entered fencer for any reason," USA Fencing said in a statement released to The Associated Press. "Under these rules, such a refusal results in disqualification and the corresponding sanctions. This policy exists to maintain fair competition standards and preserve the sport's integrity."

USA Fencing said it enacted its current transgender and non-binary athlete policy in 2023. The organization added that Turner's disqualification only applies to the March 30 tournament.

"We understand that the conversation on equity and inclusion about transgender participation in sport is evolving," the statement said. "USA Fencing will always err on the side of inclusion. —*PTI*

NZ complete ODI series sweep over Pakistan

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, 5 APRIL

Michael Bracewell

New Zealand kept their ODI record against Pakistan spotless as they eased to a 43-run win to seal a 3-0 series sweep.

After a nearly two-hour delay to the start because of a wet outfield owing to overnight rain in Mount Maunganui, Michael Bracewell and Rhys Mariu's half-centuries got New Zealand up to 264 in 42 overs. Pakistan made a slow start amid a freak injury to Imamul-Haq, and while there were contributions right down the order led by a Babar half-century, New Zealand never let Pakistan get on top of the asking rate. Five more wickets for Ben Sears saw New Zealand regularly chip away as Pakistan folded for 221. For the third successive game, Rizwan won the toss and decided to put New Zealand in. Naseem Shah came in for the concussed Haris Rauf and had an immediate impact, squaring Nick Kelly up to get an early wicket. New Zealand 264 for 8 (Bracewell 59, Mariu 58, Mitchell 43, Akif 4-62, Naseem 2-54) beat Pakistan 221 (Babar 50, Sears 5-34, Duffy 2-40) by 43 runs. —*PTI*

ARGENTINA SHOOTING WORLD CUP

Sift wins India their first gold

NEW DELHI, 5 APRIL

Indian shooter Sift Kaur Samra produced a sensational come-from-behind performance to win her first individual ISSF World Cup gold medal in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) final in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The 23-year-old from Faridkot thus earned India its first gold of the season-opening World Cup stage event at the Tiro Federal Argentino de Buenos Aires shooting range late on Friday.

The world record holder was a huge 7.2 points behind Anita Mangold of Germany after 15 shots in the first Kneeling position. However, she staged a dream comeback in the second Prone and final Standing positions to win by a canter in the end. Sift finished with 458.6 points at the end of the 45-shot final, while Mangold ended 3.3 points behind on 455.3.

Junior World Championship medalist Arina Altukhova of Kazakhstan was third, bowing out after the 44th shot with a tally of 445.9.

After missing out on medals in the first final on competition day one, India have now ended competition day two in second spot on the standings with a gold and a bronze, won earlier in the men's 3P by Chain Singh. China is on top with a gold and a silver each.

Sift did extremely well to qualify in top spot with a strong 590, when the likes of reigning Olympic champion Chiara Leone and former Olympic champion Nina Christen, both from Switzerland, could not make the top eight.

A host of Olympic medalists like Alexandria Le of Kazakhstan and Mary Tucker of the US also could not cross the qualifying hurdle. —*PTI*

Sift Kaur Samra